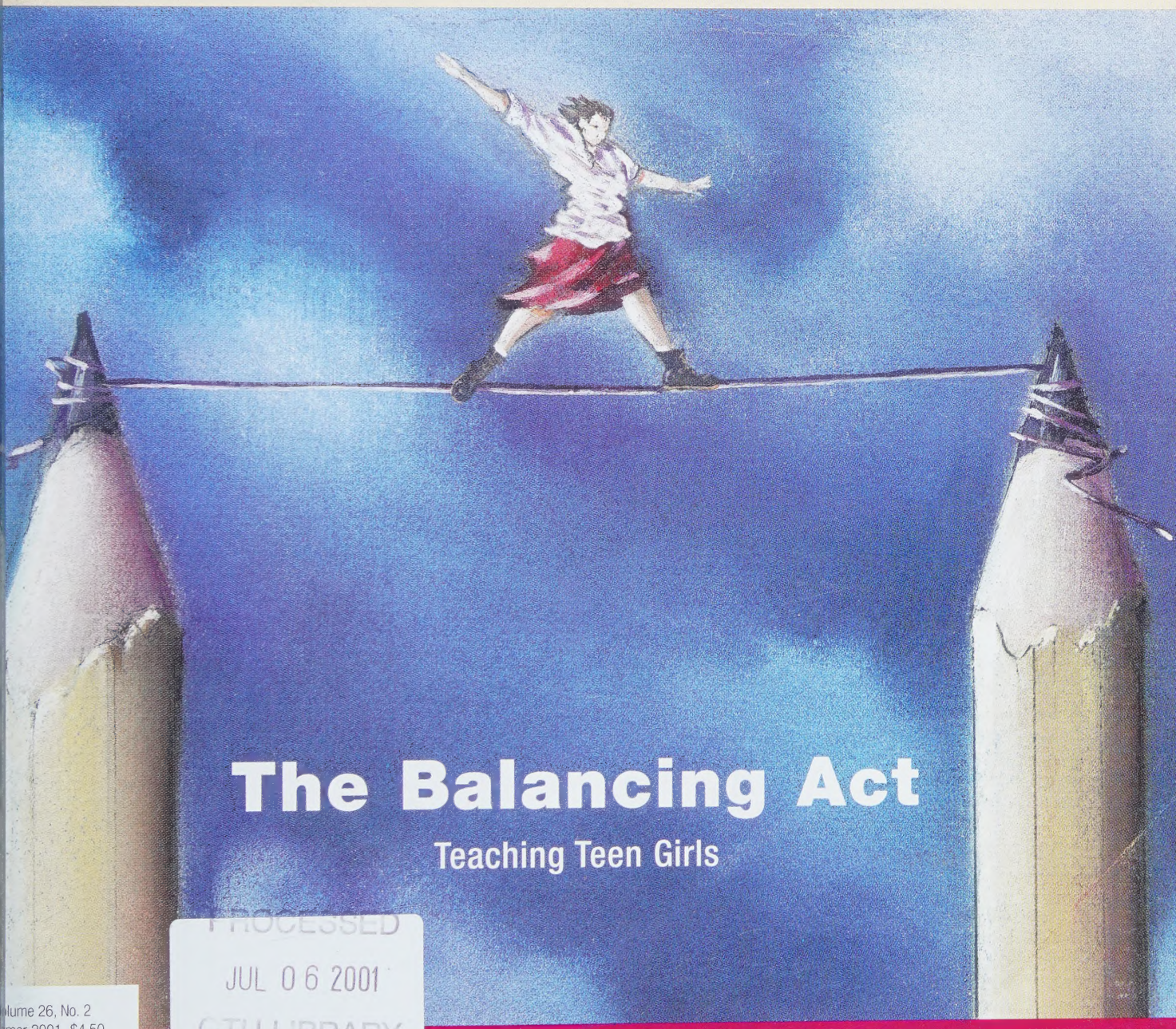
Susie Orbach 2001: Fat is *Still* a Feminist Issue

Lilith

the independent Jewish women's magazine



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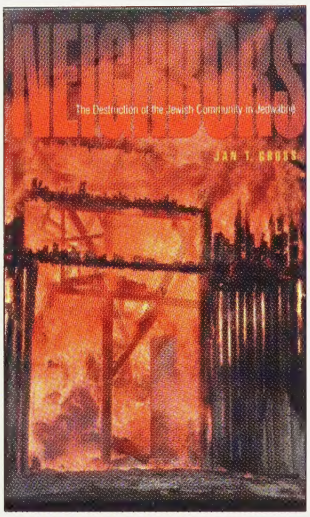

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Jan T. Gross

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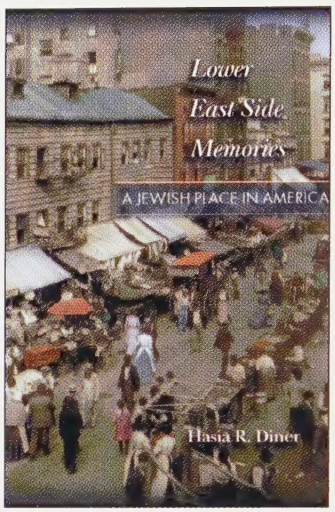

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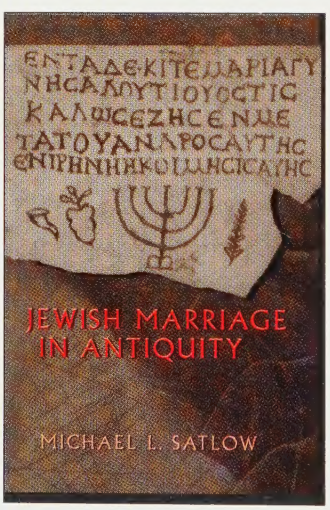

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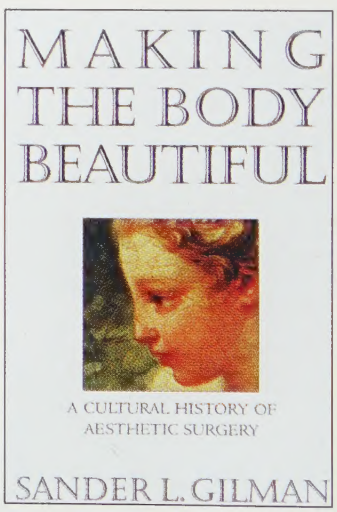

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Lilith

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—from The Alphabet of Ben Sira, *23a-b*

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Abortion Rights, Abortion Access: Lessons in Empathy

I spend a lot of time on college campuses, speaking with students about what worries or provokes them. Sooner or later we get to the persistent stereotyping of Jews, especially Jewish women (still prevalent, believe it or not, on a lot of campuses). And we almost always talk about definitions of feminism and fear of feminism (still a problem, believe it or not; you can read what high schoolers say on this subject on page 18 in this issue). Students I meet with ruminate, much more realistically than in years past, about gender inequality in the workplace, about how to combine work with childbearing (only the females raise this issue), about the glass ceiling, the concrete ceiling and, as one rabbinical student put it, the stained-glass ceiling (not completely shattered yet, believe it or not).

Add to these concerns a new consciousness among students about a dormant worry many women (and men) had thought we'd not have to reawaken, or revisit: the possible confiscation of reproductive freedoms. These freedoms include the right to safe and legal abortion guaranteed by the Supreme Court under *Roe v. Wade*. Some state legislatures are chipping away at this right by putting impediments in front of women seeking to end unwanted pregnancies. And this in the face of mounting evidence that children born to mothers who did not want to carry the pregnancy to term are more likely to have unhappy childhoods scarred by neglect, abuse, and, later, by crime.

I suspect that I'm not telling you anything new. But there's a surprise. Or at least I was surprised. On one campus this spring, I told the students that I feared any obstacles that might delay a woman's right to obtain a safe abortion. These impediments include parental consent or notification laws, the new Federal "Unborn Victims of Violence" Act, mergers of nonsectarian hospitals with Catholic hospitals leading to a virtual ban on abortions in some locales, shrinking numbers of physicians willing to endure personal risk to perform abortions, medical school curricula that don't prepare doctors adequately to perform therapeutic abortions. My list went on. Our discussion turned to recent legislation in Virginia mandating a 24-hour wait between when a woman decides with her doctor to undergo an abortion and when she can actually have the procedure. Hearing this, an articulate junior, who described herself as staunchly in favor of abortion rights, declared, "I support a woman's right to have an abortion, but I think it's good to be spiritually prepared for such a thing. I don't think a 24-hour wait is a bad thing. It won't put the woman in any more danger, and it gives her a chance to get ready emotionally for the abortion."

I was ready to weep. Then to rail.

Instead, I took a deep breath and told the students—men and women, all sitting around having a civilized, intelligent conversation—that they were very privileged to have the luxury for spiritual preparation, as good an idea as it might seem. Imagine, I suggested, that you are a poor, rural woman who can't afford bus fare twice to the town where you've just had your pregnancy confirmed. Imagine that you're a teenager who has managed to escape from an abusive home once to get to a clinic or hospital, but that you might not be able to do it again the next day. Imagine that you have other kids at home and can't get a babysitter for them again. Imagine that your husband will beat you or kill you if he finds out you ended a pregnancy. Imagine that you took risks to get this far, but that your courage or your money or your time or your support system or your luck might not hold for another day.

I'm recounting to you here, in calm solitude at my desk, what I told the students, but I had a hard time that afternoon keeping a lid on my own emotions. I was shocked at the lack of empathy—which here is just another term for a lack of understanding of someone else's circumstances—that this young woman inadvertently revealed. She had not realized, or she had forgotten, that there are people out there who might not be like me and thee.

I forget too, sometimes. To do *tikkun olam* you have to actually be able to see, or to imagine you're seeing, people other than yourself, unlike yourself. I confronted my own shortcomings in this regard when, one bitterly cold afternoon this winter, I happened upon an elderly woman on a Boston sidewalk.

She had on a thin coat, cotton stockings and worn gloves, and her hand was reaching out. My daughter Yael and I walked over to give her some money. (The Talmud instructs us not to question the validity of the need of a beggar; the act of asking is enough indication of want.) This woman looked at us, at our bare heads. She thanked us and then, pointing to Yael, said, "You should put on a hat. Both of you should. It's too cold to be out like that." While I'd thought that we would comfort her with our random charity, she made our day warmer with her concern. Here was a complete stranger, in need herself, ready to focus on what she perceived as the needs of others, even if it was just our need for her kind advice. She actually looked at us and saw

us. I'd been feeling virtuous, beneficent, until I realized that she'd surprised me with her humanity, even with her need to be a bit bossy. I had seen her, I think, as just one more street person. I'd treated her respectfully. I had met her eyes. I had followed Maimonides' precept to give cheerfully. But I was surprised nonetheless that this woman turned out to be like me in some ways—worried about the comfort of a young girl in the cold, maybe herself a mother too. Like the college student I silently railed against, I too needed a reminder of the bridge between self and other.

We may ourselves not be women who will suffer the burdens of unwanted pregnancies or the nightmare of searching for a legal abortion as the clock ticks and the fetus grows larger. But other women, maybe our own sisters or classmates or daughters, are going to be victimized by legislators if we don't mobilize ourselves. We want to protect our own rights to safe and legal abortion, sure, but also the rights of women who may not have our freedoms or support systems, our microphones, printing presses and listserves. All of us—college students and Jewish organizations and professional associations and social change advocates—need to become as vocal as we can (even to shout in unladylike ways, if necessary), vigilant in safeguarding not only the right to choose, but also full access so that all women can exercise this right.

Susan Weidman Schneider

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Readers Respond

Oh Those Breasts!

I FOUND YOUR [breasts] articles ["How Jewish Women Feel about Their Breasts," Spring 2001] strangely one-sided (pun intended). Is the typical Jewish breast larger than average? And are we Jewish women truly all struggling with a conditioned yearning for something more compact and athletic?

As for myself, I will confess to wasting perhaps years of my life longing for a rear-end, thighs, hips, belly, midriff and upper arms that were smaller and firmer. My breasts, however, have almost always been a consolation to me. They are a trusty erogenous zone, they were a deeply satisfying means of nourishing my babies, and they continue to be the one part of my body that seems to garner approval for being soft, round and large.

The woman in *Song of Songs,* whose breasts are compared to clusters of grapes, and to twin fawns of a gazelle, ends her poem by proudly affirming that her breasts are "like towers." Please tell me she was not the last Jewish woman writer to take pleasure in her bust!

Lise Weisberger
Skokie IL

WOW! I WAS REALLY impressed with this past issue. Both Hanne Blank's ["Breasts: Notes Toward a New Cartography"] and Sarah Blustain's ["One Woman's History of her Breasts"] essays really hit close to home for me. They are the voices of young women speaking the truth about the complex relationships we have with our own bodies in this very body-centric culture.

Our bodies, especially our breasts, are intimate parts of ourselves, and yet they are forced to be so public. As soon as we walk out the door, we are forced to acknowledge how "others" feel about our bodies (because they WILL let us know!). Luckily, more and more of us are defining for ourselves what is beautiful and what is sexy. More and more, we are not letting others define our bodies for us.

Rivka Solomon
Boston MA

I APPRECIATE THAT young Jewish women want to explore their "breast consciousness." But the focus on "Boobs" [the cover line] struck a different chord for me. Maybe it's because I'm 56 years old. Maybe it's because my mother, my sister, and two of my best friends all were diagnosed with breast cancer in the prime of their lives—as were so many of our brilliant feminist leaders, including Gloria Steinem, Audre Lorde, June Jordon, and Blanche Weisen Cook, to name just a few.

Audre Lorde urged us to gather the courage to challenge what we learn is "normal," meaning the "right" color, shape, size or number of breasts. But I was most inspired by the vision she shared almost two decades ago of an army of one-breasted women descending on Congress and demanding that the use of carcinogenic, fat-stored hormones in beef feed be outlawed. There is so much breast cancer among young women today because of what has been done to the environment—and what it is doing back to us.

I resonate with the sentiments of Amy Bloom, who says she misses "the way it used to be" before the breast cancer epidemic—breasts for beauty, love, milk, and life.

Harriet Lerner
Topeka KS

SANDER GILMAN'S ARTICLE on the Venus of Willendorf and Ernst Bruke's diagram of the "perfect" female breast were wonderful ["Did You Know the Venus of Willendorf was Jewish," Spring 2001]! In spite of the horrible consequences of such theories, I found myself laughing and drawing cartoons on the supposed geometry of female anatomy.

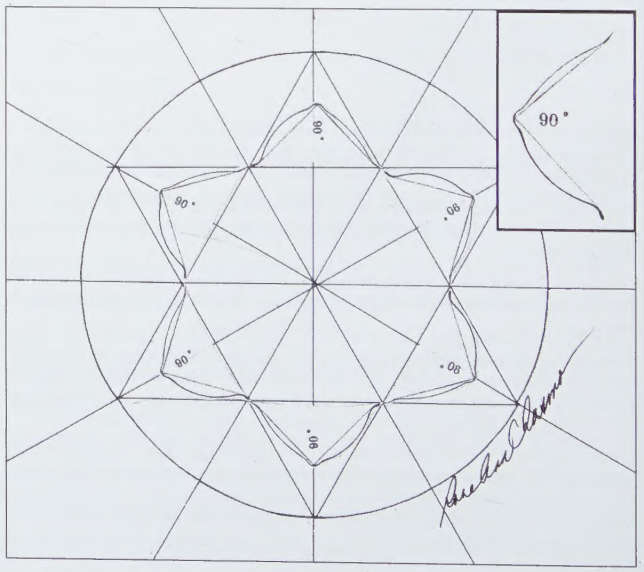
Did other readers catch the transition from Bruke's 90°—angled breast to a Magen David? Sister artists—let's see what we can do with that awful diagram!

Rose Ann Chasman
Chicago, IL

I WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED in your recent issue's articles on "Boobs". It seemed to me that all of the articles were very negative and self-hating. NONE mentioned the normal function of breasts—to nourish a baby.

Breasts are functional organs, not merely decorative or sexual objects. The miraculous, marvelous milk they produce provides the newborn with immunologic function and optimal nutrition for the critical months of infancy and early childhood. There is emerging data on the importance of breastfeeding in prevention of chronic illnesses in adult life as well. The physical closeness of normal breastfeeding promotes optimal emotional bonding—essential for the development of a psychologically healthy human being.

Supporting breastfeeding as normal and essential to the health of our children is a woman's issue. Women who are employed outside



the home often are discriminated against when they try to maintain breastfeeding. Family/childbirth leaves are woefully inadequate, more so in the USA than in other countries. Women are asked to leave stores and restaurants or breastfeed their babies in the bathroom, even though it is legal to breastfeed an infant wherever it is legal for the mother and infant to be; more legal protection for breastfeeding is still needed.

There are a number of references to breastfeeding in the Torah and Talmud. Perhaps you could write a POSITIVE article about breasts and breastfeeding to counter your recent negativity.

I am proud, as a Jewish woman, a pediatrician, and a mother, that my breasts are the marvelous, functional, organs that they are. My body carried and birthed my children and my breasts and loving arms nurtured them. My four children have become wonderful healthy young Jewish adults.

Jewish women should be proud of their breasts, not ashamed of them!

Linda L. Shaw MD
Altoona PA

Jewish Mothers, Gay Sons

THE ARTICLE "JEWISH MOTHERS and Gay Sons" [Spring 2001] quoted Cornell psychology professor Ritch Savin-Williams as saying, in essence, that it is easier for young girls to be lesbians than it is for young boys to be gay. WRONG!

On top of having second class status for being female, lesbians have to deal with fear, hatred and violence from men because our existence challenges the patriarchal status quo. Where was this guy when I was going through hell? Where is he now, when I am careful where I go at night? If only I had known that I had it so good!

Corinne Sabo
San Antonio TX

Feminism & Judaism in Poland Today

WHEN I READ SHANA PENN's article "Democracy in the Balance: Jewish Feminists Rally for Tolerance in a Post-Communist World" [Winter 2000], I was pleasantly surprised that it was so deeply insightful.

I know first hand how difficult it is to translate the complexity of issues emerging in Polish democracy into a language to comprehensible to American readers. What is considered socially acceptable discourse in public debate in Poland often differs from the same type of discourse here.

Living and working in Czestochowa for two years in the mid-90s, I gained an appreciation of the historical and emotional complexities of Polish culture in addition to its richness. Reading this article, I felt a sense of joy that someone was giving voice to these complexities, because the end result is a cross-cultural bridge.

The article left me with a sense of optimism about a culture opening up and a sense of urgency feeling the situation is indeed "in the balance." As Shana Penn said, "Although these feminists dare to speak, their position remains precarious." I've been contacting friends in Poland and feminist organizations to see what contribution I might make. It would be wonderful if others found ways to use the bridge this article has created to support these courageous and spirited feminists.

Laurie Wagner
Oakland CA

AS AN AMERICAN Jewish woman who has been living and working in the Jewish community in Poland for the past seven months, I feel it is very important for me to comment upon Shana Penn's article.

I am a volunteer for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's Jewish Service Corps, an organization that has been deeply involved in developing Jewish life in post-Communist Poland. I work closely with the Jewish community in Warsaw, and Jewish leaders around Poland.

First, I would like to give the author credit for her description of the debate in the synagogue on Jewish life in Poland. It is critical to show the world that these discussions are happening in Poland, that indeed a Polish Jewish community exists and it is "silent no more." Her examples of anti-Semitism and anti-women sentiments do represent a reality that exists in Poland today. But many of her comments pertaining to the Jewish community are irresponsible and inaccurate.

My personal practices do not lie in the Orthodox movement, but I value many of its traditions, beliefs, and methods, and, first and foremost, I understand why people embrace it. I think that Penn demonstrated great intolerance and a lack of understanding about Orthodox Judaism.

Penn was completely off-base when describing the activities of Bejt Warszawa, the new liberal group. I met Cyndi Culpepper, the woman rabbi from the United States who led services in the liberal synagogue for the High Holy days. I attended morning services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and, in my opinion, she was not timid nor too pedagogic. In fact, my favorite part of the experience was that she brought so much music to the service. Also, Rabbi Culpepper's background as a convert to Judaism from Catholicism was a source of common ground, as many people here grew up surrounded by Catholic tradition. Moreover, because Rabbi Culpepper was so well-received, she is returning to Poland to lead Pesach seders and workshops.

There are a number of strong, independent women in the Polish Jewish community. While they seek out a place for themselves, they also realize that the community needs to stick together if it wants to survive and succeed.

Unfortunately, the few good points made by Penn are difficult to take seriously because of the extremist

view she presents and the gross over generalizations that she makes. She also does not seem to have a clear understanding of the demographics, history, and current challenges of the Jewish community in Poland. If I ever thought I was becoming something of a feminist, after reading Penn's article I know that I would never want to be associated with that movement which sounds as intolerant as it accuses its attackers to be.

Stacey Nolish
Warsaw Poland

Shana Penn replies:
As a concerned American volunteer, Stacey Nolish has a responsibility to listen with sensitive ears to the grievances of the disenfranchised Jewish women, who dared to express their needs, as I reported. I would have liked her to state whether her views represent the Joint (whose decades-long work is respected in Poland) or simply herself. Fortunately, the Warsaw Jewish community responded with greater care toward the women's concerns than Nolish considers valuable. Both the Jewish magazine Midrasz and the Gemeinah (Warsaw's Jewish religious community center) organized discussions on Judaism and feminism in the months following the incidents in my report. According to Nolish, if voices of dissent do not offer "balanced" perspectives, then feminism itself should be rejected.

Nolish did not attend the problematic Rosh Hashana evening service at Beit Warszawa, which I described in my piece. I question why she thinks she can negate the objections voiced by the Polish Jewish feminists who attended that service and were disappointed in its lack of warmth, music and spiritual embrace. There was no transliterated or Polish-language prayer text, no discussion and, from the Polish Jews I interviewed, a perception of patronizing attitudes by the American hosts.

The cultural differences that she misses exist both among different groups of Polish Jews (Holocaust survivors, communists, the descendants of both, Polish Jews, Jewish Poles and Poles of "Jewish origins," feminists, misogynists, traditionalists, liberals, etc.) and also between American Jews and Polish Jews.

Why persuade people who have just broken free of an authoritarian system to stick together in order to survive, if this means living without courage or honesty? The Jewish feminists and the community that they have created are teaching an important lesson in Poland today: to continue to respect dissent.

CORRECTION:
In Rachel Josefowitz Siegel's review of *Tangled Lives: Daughters, Mothers, and the Crucible of Aging* [Spring 2001], the sentence describing the conditions of the author's mother's life should read "She takes us into the exhausting, demeaning, and inhumane working conditions inflicted on her mother as a garment worker and the indignities of the pre-welfare, pre-labor-union world of the working poor."

Talk back to us on the Web: www.lilith.org

Coming Out as Jews in a Retirement Home

THANK YOU FOR SENDING your "Miriam's Cup" ritual for Passover. At the retirement community where my mother lives, there are many Jewish people, some of them not "admitting" they are Jews, some completely without family, some not well enough to leave for holidays. All of them are cut off—in one way or another—from active participation in Jewish life.

Last Rosh Hashanah, I gathered those I knew of, mostly my mom's friends, at one large table in the dining room, and brought in an enormous pot of chicken soup, my grandmother's candlesticks, raisin challah, gefilte fish, horseradish, apples and honey, and wine and grape juice. We had a wonderful time, told stories, talked about the New Year, etc.

For Hanukkah, we ended up with more than 40 people. I got the families of four of the other women involved and we were thrilled to have one fifteen-year-old girl participating. The girl lit the candles and burned her fingers. This gave every one of the old women the opportunity to advise her about how to make the hurting stop. One Holocaust survivor, in late early-stage dementia, came out of her shell to tell me that I wasn't singing the prayers right. She then led the prayers herself.

I prepared song sheets using a photocopy machine that enlarged everything 300%. I'd provided the chef with a zillion boxes of latke mix and talked with him about how to make them. He served them half-cooked, and the group divided between those who wanted to march into the kitchen and cook them "correctly" and those who wanted to thank him for trying. We got the rest of them cooked "right" and he came out and made a speech and everyone cheered him.

I have to cut rituals pretty short, because sitting very long is painful for many of the residents, because many of them have limited attention spans, and because the serving staff has to clean up and go home. But each time I do something like this, the group of Jews who "come out" grows larger.

Susan Koppelman
Tucson AZ

kol ishah

"The Voices of Women." Traditionally, the voice of the Jewish woman was not to be heard in public, lest it arouse men. No more. These pages are for news about Jewish women, in our own strong voices.

Jewish Women Nurturing Jewish Film

This fall, the Washington D.C. Jewish Community Center will present its 12th annual Jewish Film Festival. Which, as usual, will be run by women.

In fact, women run most of the 60-plus Jewish film festivals that take place every year all around the world, said Deborah Kaufman, who in 1981 founded the very first such festival, in San Francisco.

Miriam Morsel Nathan

But why women?

One reason is sexism. According to filmmaker Aviva Kempner, best known for her award-winning 1999 film *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg*, the Jewish establishment views cultural activities as a low-priority item. Running Jewish film festivals has therefore become the women's domain.

Which they probably do better than men, anyway. "When you run a festival," said Kempner, who was also one of the D.C. festival's founders, "you are a good programmer, a good host, a nurturer. You nurture the audience and the filmmakers. Women are used to juggling and nurturing."

As for actual film production in general, it is a well-known fact that women are vastly underrepresented. The D.C. festival especially seeks out films made by women. Still, of last year's 45 films, only 16 were by women.

One was *Chronicle of Love* (Tzipi Trope, Israel, 1998), a powerful story about domestic violence in Israel.

"To show this film we felt we had to have a daytime screening, and include a social worker as part of the program. Because a woman in that situation could come safely during the day. She could find someone to talk with. For us, showing this film had special meaning and purpose," said Jennifer Katz, who handles the festival publicity and programming.

More than anything, running a festival and making films is about storytelling, said festival director Miriam Morsel Nathan. "Men tell stories, too. But women have traditionally been the keepers of stories, tradition and culture."

From the film *Chronicle of Love.*

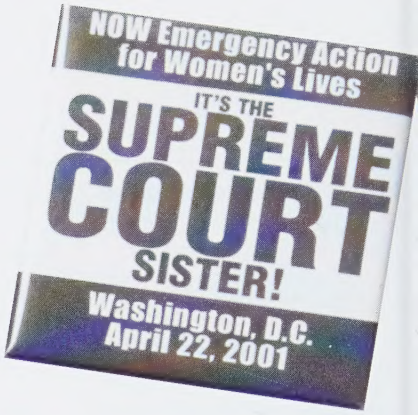
The **12th Washington Jewish Film Festival: An Exhibition of International Cinema**, will take place November 29 – December 9, 2001, at the DC Jewish Community Center, 1529 16th Street NW at Q Street, and other locations around the city. For information about the festival, and to preview the offerings, which should provide ideas for other programmers across the continent, check the JCC website (www.wjff.org.), or call (202) 777–3248.

— SUSAN H. BAROCAS

OVERHEARD: at a February conference sponsored by Edah, the Modern Orthodox organization trying to hold fast against the right wing in Orthodoxy. Participants at a workshop on the growing phenomenon of Orthodox women's *t'fillah* (prayer) groups said that they were having a tough time convincing their school-age daughters to join them in their all-female prayer sessions.

"Young girls tell me," one *t'fillah*-group activist said, "that they won't join, because if they do they won't make a marriage." Another woman said that her daughters' male teacher at yeshiva had told them to go home and tell their mothers that women's prayer groups were forbidden. The girls did as the rabbi had told them.

kol ishah



Safeguarding Our Abortion Rights

We have an obligation to safeguard the reproductive rights of all women. Any legal restrictions on abortion, including late-term, could prevent even the most conservative Orthodox Jew from following Jewish law, which specifically states that a fetus must be aborted if the mother's life is in danger.

But with the advent of the anti-choice Bush administration, whose Attorney General John Ashcroft has stated that he opposes legal abortion even in the case of rape or incest, attacks are now mounting to limit this right, guaranteed in the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision. And rather than directly attacking *Roe*, which conservatives admit they have little chance of overturning, the anti-choice lobby is trying a bit-by-bit approach.

The good news, though, is that Jewish women's organizations are right out there, loudly protesting such outrages as, for example, the global "gag rule," which prohibits U.S. government funds from going to any family planning group abroad that counsels or provides abortions. President Bush instituted the gag rule on his very first day in office, after bragging during the campaign that his administration would celebrate life—even as Texas led the nation in executions.

As this issue of LILITH was going to press, the National Council of Jewish Women, Hadassah and the American Jewish Congress' Commission on Women's Equality were bombarding Congress with press releases and e-mails that objected to the coyly-named "Unborn Victims of Violence" bill that the House passed on April 26. This bill, which House Republican Lindsey O. Graham of South Carolina introduced in March, purports to protect women against violence. But its real purpose, New York Democrat Jerrold Nadler told The Washington Post on March 16, is "to establish a doctrine, contrary to the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*, that the fetus is a separate person." The Washington Post also reported that anti-choice Republicans say that they will try to tie abortion, and even contraception restrictions, to spending bills. Former President Bill Clinton had used his veto power to protect the nation from having earlier versions of these bills become law.

At the state level, legislatures this season are trying to attach so-called "conscience clauses"—which allow institutions to deny services to patients—onto legislation aimed specifically at improving women's health. In New York, a bill requiring, among other things, that insurance companies cover contraceptives for women, was stopped in its tracks late last winter by the noisy protests of the Catholic Church and ultra-conservative Jewish group Agudath Israel. Minnesota National Abortion Rights and Reproductive League reports that the group "Citizens Concerned for Life" have introduced 10 bills that would restrict women's reproductive rights. Forty-two states have laws on the books requiring forced parental consent and/or 24-hour waiting periods prior to abortions.

USA Today reported in March that 11 states are now considering legislation to force abortion providers to warn patients of a possible connection between abortion and breast cancer. The anti-abortion lobby first seized upon this supposed connection in 1994, basing it upon a study that the medical establishment later universally called flawed. Further studies, reported by such prestigious journals as New England Journal of Medicine and Epidemiology, turned up no such connection. Yet in today's increasingly anti-woman environment, the anti-choice right may again be succeeding in linking abortion with breast cancer in the minds of the public, especially on Internet sites aimed at teen girls.

To stay up to date on this urgent issue, and to learn what legislative initiatives may be coming up in you own area, check the web sites for NARAL (*www.NARAL.org*) and The Center for Reproductive Law and Rights (*www.CRLP.org*).

—ALICE SPARBERG ALEXIOU

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Women, Sex and Incontinence

It's the health problem that we don't want to talk about. Many women, particularly post-menopause, may experience urinary incontinence during sex. Instead of unleashing a flood of pleasure, having an orgasm suddenly releases a flood of shame.

But the experts want you to know that leaking urine need not be a death blow to your sex life.

The image of removing a wet pad as part of foreplay, or laying a felt-covered plastic sheet over your satin ones, may not exactly pulse with eroticism, but incontinence will be a fact of life for some women—and a part of their sexual lives, as well. Because of the proximity of pelvic organs, a weakened or overactive bladder may be activated during sexual activity. "The neurophysiology of orgasm is closely related nerve-wise to the neurophysiology of urination," says Dr. Lauri Romanzi, a urogynecologist and assistant clinical professor at Cornell Weill Medical College in New York. "The pelvis is Grand Central Station for bodily function," she added, "there's a lot going on in a small space."

"I call pelvic floor exercises the dental floss of our specialty"

An estimated 20 million or more women—more than twice the number of men—have some degree of incontinence, according to the National Association of Incontinence. This can range from the temporary leaking after childbirth (when sex is less of a concern) to a more chronic condition. The most common form of urinary incontinence, stress incontinence, is leakage during physical stress such as sneezing or running for a bus—or having sex.

The bad news is that many women suffer in silence. Too embarrassed to bring this up with their partners or doctors, they begin to avoid sex. Nor is the problem limited to elderly women. For younger women, the subject has been even more taboo.

But the good news is that the silence is breaking. In what may have been a first in the consciousness-raising department, last year Carol Levin, founding chair of Women's Own, a volunteer organization dedicated to women's health issues based at the New York University School of Medicine, addressed the Task Force on the Jewish Woman at the New York-UJA Federation about incontinence. Levin said that most of the time incontinence is treatable, if not curable. A urogynecologist, a specialist who focuses on female pelvic health, can evaluate and recommend treatments, from biofeedback to surgery.

"I am more than a breast," Levin told LIILTH. "We have to be focused on the whole person."

Experts say that a woman shouldn't wait until she begins having trouble holding her urine to start paying attention to her pelvis. There is something all women can do even if incontinence is not yet a problem—Kegels. No, this is not another word for pudding, but a simple exercise of contracting and strengthening the pelvic muscles (named for its inventor, Arnold Kegel). You could be building up your pelvic muscles while you're reading this. "I call pelvic floor exercises the dental floss of our specialty," says Dr. Romanzi.

Even when not curable, incontinence need not be the end of sex. The experts suggest: Try to void completely before having sex. Limit fluid intake, particularly coffee, tea and alcohol before sex. Talk openly with your sexual partner. A sex therapist can work with couples to overcome discomfort. It's better to explain the situation than to try and hide it.

"It's so uncommon that coital incontinence wouldn't at least be significantly reduced in frequency with treatment," Romanzi says. "I just tell patients that even though it's still happening, it's not something they need to be mortified about."

—ETTA SANDERS

LILITH MAGAZINE'S COVERAGE OF JEWISH WOMEN'S HEALTH CONCERNS IS MADE POSSIBLE THIS YEAR WITH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE NEW YORK JEWISH WOMEN'S FOUNDATION, 130 EAST 59TH STREET, #563B, NEW YORK, NY 10022 (212)836-1478; FAX (212)836-1831.

KUDOS: To Washington, D.C. Congregation Kesher Israel and Rabbi Barry Freundel, for seceding from the Orthodox Union in protest over its handling of the accusations of sexual and psychological abuse against Rabbi Baruch Lanner. In the spring issue, *LILITH* reported on the OU's refusal to hold accountable those who protected Rabbi Lanner, despite years of complaints from teenagers and their parents about his abuse. Lanner is now under indictment in New Jersey.

Frames from *The Triangle Fire* by Trinia Robbins, LILITH.

ROSE FREEDMAN, the last survivor of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire, died in February, energetic and righteously angry even at age 107. "Hundred forty-six people (died) in half an hour," Freedman said in the recent PBS documentary "Three Miracles," part of the series "The Living Century." "I have always tears in my eyes when I think. It should never have happened. The executives with couple steps could have opened the door," Freedman said, referring to locked doors which trapped the Triangle workers. "But they thought they were better than the working people. . . . What good is a rich man if he hasn't got a heart?"

Surprising Seders Safe Space for Battered Women

While the *afikoman* has long since been found, we thought it well worth mentioning two special seders that took place last Passover, which can provide ideas for planning your community seder next year...

Surrounded by their own artwork, reading and speaking their own words from a hagada they created, 26 women in the Seattle area gathered in secret to celebrate freedom—their own. Why a secret? Many of the women—current or recovering victims of domestic violence—could only participate in such an event without their abusers' knowledge. And while most have physically left their abusive situations, many are still ensnared in messy court and custody battles or have been slandered within their communities.

This seder, now in its second year, was conceived by Alison Iser, Community Advocate for the Eastside Domestic Violence Program in Bellevue, Washington. "It's something I wanted to do for years," said Iser. "There's a natural connection between the Passover story and the stories of battered women. It's a great opportunity to use the seder as a context to explore those stories more." Iser's goals were to find others who shared her passion for creating the seder and to include as many people as possible in the effort.

Iser met her goals. Sponsored by more than 15 state and local agencies and members of the Seattle Jewish community, the seder offers women an opportunity to celebrate Passover and Judaism with other Jewish women who identify themselves as battered. One woman wrote in her post-seder evaluation, "Knowing that the community actively supported this event gives me a feeling of love and nourishment." Another wrote, "I have had to practice being Jewish in hiding for 15 years so this opened new doors. Thank you."

Of course, a seder alone does not a community make. In response to requests last year, Seattle's Jewish Family Service's Project DVORA, which helps Jewish victims of domestic violence, began hosting Rosh Chodesh groups. Jewish educator Ruz Gulko, of Herzl-Ner Tamid Conservative Congregation, and Michelle Lifton, the domestic-violence program coordinator of Project DVORA, regularly bring together women who have survived violence in their own homes to discuss the weekly Torah portion as it relates to their lives as battered women. Some have come to know each other and meet outside the agency walls, establishing and solidifying a community of survivors.

These women created artwork and portions of the hagada in workshops organized by the seder planning committee, volunteers from synagogues and family service organizations. In the specialized hagada's Call to Hallel, the blessings for God, one woman writes from her own experience, "Oppression doesn't come all at once, like a broken arm. When I look back I can see the steps down into despair. I can name some of them, but it is hard to find the first step. The one where you say, 'There! That's when it began.' I felt it for a long time, but one day, like the sky on a cold night, everything was clear. Blessed One, guide us on our Journey, we have to go."

—LIZZY S. BENNETT

A Celebration of Freedom Behind Bars

Across the country, at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women in New York State, seven women hosted their own seder this year.

"There is an implicit challenge in celebrating the feast of freedom behind bars," said Rabbi Robert E. Fine, Jewish chaplain of the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility and rabbi of Bet Torah in Mt. Kisco, New York. Fine has struggled with this paradox since his first prison seder in the spring of 1986. "While these women are denied fundamental freedoms like choosing what they will do each day," Fine said, "there are other levels—inner spiritual levels—of liberating oneself from whatever tyrannies have oppressed."

Lilith reported on the Jewish women at Bedford Hills in one of the magazine's first issues, in the 1970s, and has sent copies of the magazine, and other materials, to the prison from time to time.

This year's participants—incarcerated mostly for violent crimes—range in age, length of jail sentence and exposure to Judaism. The seder means a great deal to them, in large part because the surrounding community has gotten involved. The Bet Torah Sisterhood sponsors the event, and the inmates have grown to know the volunteers' families over the years. In addition, each prisoner is permitted to invite her own guests to share the occasion, and children often attend. Rabbi Heather Altman of Bet Torah led the service this year and used the Ma'ayan hagada, written from a feminist perspective. "There was a wonderful, almost celebratory feeling. The women were so appreciative." Rabbi Fine recalled. "Whether it's their own habits that have enslaved them, relationships that have enslaved them—these women are no different from others in identifying what holds them back from what they can achieve in life. Each person needs to identify the Egypt inside that they need to be liberated from."

Donations for the Jewish women's program of Bedford Hills can be sent to: Bet Torah Sisterhood, Bedford Hills Program, 60 Smith Avenue, Mt. Kisco, New York 10549.

You can also make a tax-deductible contribution to LILITH to help underwrite the cost of sending magazines to Jewish women behind bars: LILITH, Prison Magazine Program, 250 West 57th Street, #2432, New York, NY 10107.

—L.S.B

A REAL MITZVAH: Bikur Cholim, or visiting the sick, is a central mitzvah that nowadays is shouldered primarily by rabbis.

"But it is a mitzvah that is prescribed for everybody, men and women, rich and poor," said Vicki Rosenstreich, director of training for the Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin Bikur Cholim Coordinating Council, which is part of New York's Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services. BCCC, working to re-ignite this tradition within the Jewish community, is sponsoring its 14th annual conference in November in New York, with workshops both for professionals and volunteers on how to comfort the sick.

"Jewish tradition says that if you don't visit a patient, it's as if you shed the blood of that patient," Rosenstreich said. "Rabbinic sources say that it's as if those who visit take away 1/60th of a patient's illness. Although," Rosenstreich added, "it doesn't mean they are cured. But patients who have visitors tend to fare better." Even the visitors benefit, she added. "Studies show that if the visitors feel they have done a good job, they get a 'helper's high,' a rush of endorphins that remain in the body for about 20 minutes after the visit."

For publications or to learn more about how to visit the sick, call 212-399-3524, or www.jbfcs.org

VOTING WITH THEIR FEET: Young Jewish women, says Rebecca Metzger, 24, are quitting their jobs at Jewish nonprofits in droves. Part of that exodus was Metzger herself, who, in August 2000, left the organization (which she declined to identify) where she had worked for two years. The reasons for her departure? Not the low pay and 60-hour weeks, which are common to all nonprofits, Metzger writes in the latest issue of *Journey*, published by May'an, the Jewish women's project at the JCC of the Upper West Side in New York. Rather, it is the queasy truths that Jews as a community don't like to acknowledge. Truths such as Jewish organizations' emphasis on raising big money rather than fostering grassroots social activism. Or blatant and sometimes paternalistic sexism, which takes such forms as inappropriate questions about dating, or one male boss's commenting on how pretty his young female employees are.

"I remember sitting at a meeting at my old job while the executive staff wondered aloud how to involve more young Jews in the organization. He never once solicited my opinion. Did my involvement as a young Jewish staff member not count?" Metzger writes.

Abusive Israeli General Gets Off Lightly

In March, it looked as if Israel's sexual harassment law was finally baring its teeth when a Jerusalem court convicted army general and former Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordecai of sexually assaulting two women, one of whom had been a soldier under his command. But it was too soon for Israeli feminists to rejoice: as LILITH was going to press, Associated Press reported that a panel of three judges gave Mordecai merely an 18-month suspended sentence for his crime. According to AP, one judge—a woman—thought he should have gone to jail. But the other two, both men, said that they took into account Mordecai's public achievements. His supporters, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency earlier reported, had objected that such acts with which Mordecai was charged—which included forcing the soldier to walk back to the army base alone at night after she refused his advances—"were a norm in the Israeli army and political circles for decades."

Previous LILITH reporting has also mentioned the growing public awareness of sex slavery in Israel, after a highly critical Amnesty International report last year catapulted the subject into embarrassing international headlines. As a result, last July Knesset member Yael Dayan helped push through a law that makes trafficking in humans a crime. In March, the Israeli news magazine *The Jerusalem Report* ran a story about Victoria, a young woman from Moldova who, after first being trapped into prostitution, was then jailed by the Israeli government because she was an illegal alien. With the backing of a Tel Aviv-based advocacy group for illegal foreign workers, Victoria is now suing both her procurers and, in an unprecedented move, the Israeli government.

The fact that Israeli lawyers are helping one brave victim fight back, both civilly and criminally, is of tremendous importance," wrote activist Phyllis Chesler in the current issue of *Bridges: The Jewish Feminist Journal*. "Such lawsuits do not yet exist in Saudi, Egypt, Abu Dabi, or Pakistan, or further away in Russia and Thailand, where similar trafficking is sickeningly rife."

—A. S. A.

JEWS, INTERRUPTING: Author Deborah Tannen, best known for her book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, has plenty to say about how Jews talk. At a recent lecture at Georgetown University in Washington D.C., where she is a professor of linguistics, Tannen spoke about what she calls a "high-involvement" style of conversation, in which the listener speaks along with–and often interrupts–the speaker. This is, says Tannen, characteristic of New York Jews, and, by osmosis, New Yorkers in general. Jews don't think it's rude to interrupt? On the contrary, says Tannen, interrupting shows that you're paying attention. "You don't want to feel that you have to keep checking your listener to make sure they're awake."

A Hard Row to Hoe

An African-American Woman Chooses to Be a Jew

BY MO FLEMING

It was 1999, and time to go back to work. The previous year I had left my job as an operations manager at a literary magazine to finish a novel. Although I was now looking for a similar position, a tiny secretarial ad for a shul in Princeton, New Jersey, caught my attention.

The ad was an invitation that I, an African-American, had been waiting on since my conversion to Judaism eleven years earlier. In those 'between' years I had wanted to enter and participate in temple life, to institute domestic rituals, begin tradition-building for my future offspring. Yet somehow I had been in stasis.

I did not convert to marry Marty, my 'nice Jewish boy from Brooklyn.' Our wedding took place in 1988, when I was 25. The following year, I became a Jew. Marty was firmly Jewish in his cultural identity, but he was a non-practicing Jew, indifferent to ritual. His knowledge of Judaism was skimpy, yet despite his ambivalence, Marty had made it clear that if he ever had children he wanted them to be Jewish. The task of raising our future child Jewishly, I realized, would fall on my shoulders. I was the woman. And it seemed to me that it is we women, much more than men, who pass down religion to our children. Religion, especially Judaism, I would discover, is inseparable from the home, typically women's domain.

Besides, religion was important to me. As was family, which for me, an African-American, had been a source of both joy and pain. The oldest of the 23-some grandchildren of my generation, I spent summers as a child with my cousins down in Greenville, South Carolina, fussed over by aunts and friends. But when the summer was over I had to return to the bleak urban environment of Brooklyn, where rats and roaches marched through our apartment, and using the dimes that I had received as change from purchasing milk to buy candy resulted in a beating from my mother.

And I firmly believed that a family should share one religion. However, three years passed in my relationship with Marty before nerve and motivation converged for me, and I made the appointment with Rabbi Hillel Rudafsky, leader of a Conservative shul in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Rabbi Rudafsky, a heavy-set man with a scratchy voice, appeared to be in his 60s. His gentle demeanor made me comfortable as he addressed the disadvantages of being Jewish: the restrictions on diet, on Sabbath activities, a history of oppression and anti-Semitism. Moreover, he wondered, why would I, as an African American with my own legacy of oppression, take on yet another burden?

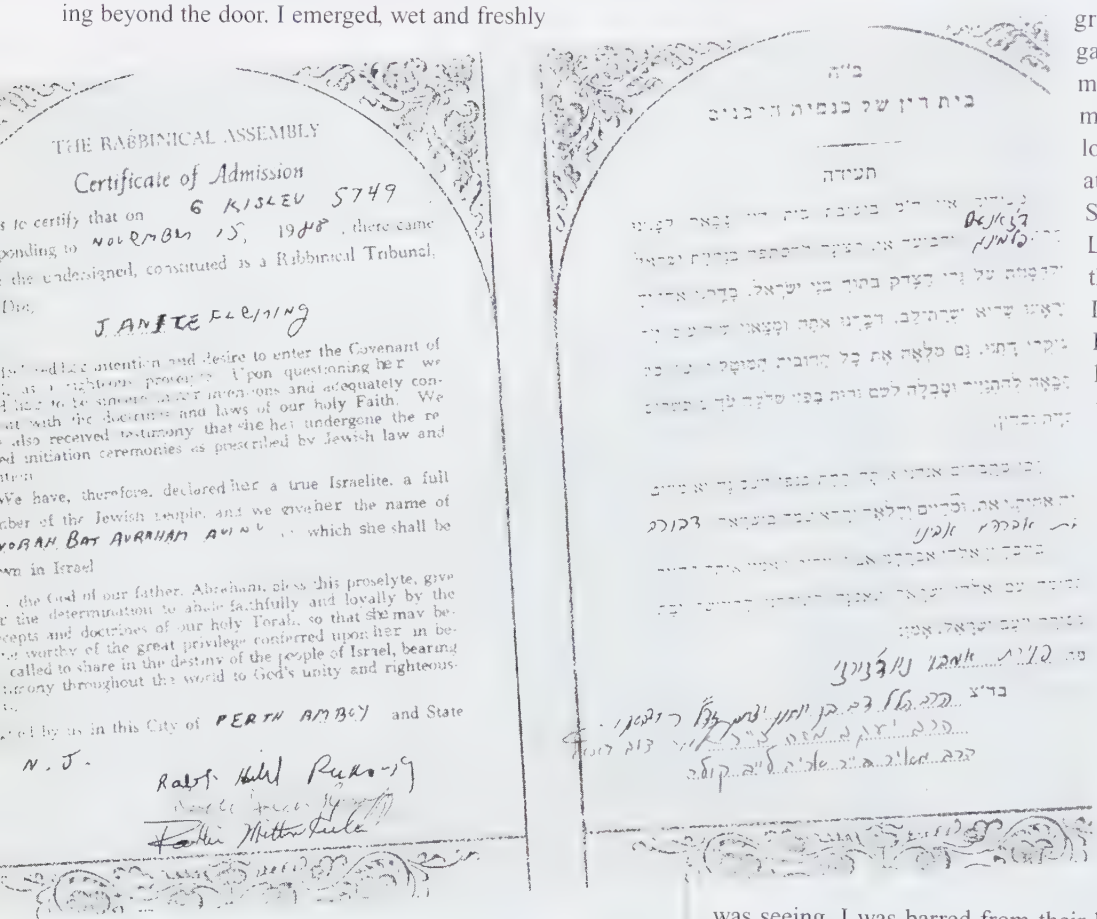
It had never occurred to me that being black and Jewish might be a double burden. Like Marty, I had grown up in Brooklyn. He came from Canarsie, then a largely white community where blacks lived in the projects at the margins. On his street Jews were the majority. But my Brooklyn was the ghettos of Ocean Hill-Brownsville, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Bushwick, where my mother's husband—not my father—beat her at least twice a week. Where I carried bruises from the same hateful hands to school until I was eight. For me being poor and black had specific consequences more immediate than the historical drama of living in a country that bled us for our labor and despised us for the color of our skin.

I considered the rabbi's question. It was evident that he was discouraging me. But I did not feel rejected because of my race. He knew what it was to be Jewish in the world as well as I knew what it meant to be black. This was our com-

I am a Jew with travelling shoes. The road rose up under my feet long before I realized where I was going.

mon ground, and as they say down South, it was a "hard row to hoe." I had been breaking hard ground all my life. I went back to the rabbi.

Several months later, when he felt I had studied enough Torah, Hebrew, ritual and history, I was ready for the *mikvah*, the ritual immersion that would mark my change of status from student to Jew. I dipped nude in the lukewarm pool, answered a few questions I don't remember, and said the necessary prayers to the group of rabbis listening beyond the door. I emerged, wet and freshly



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תעודה

birthed, with a new name and adopted ancestors, a member of the House of Israel.

After my conversion, I felt I was Jewish by myself. In the 20-odd years that I have known Marty, I have never seen him do anything more Jewish than lighting candles at Hanukah. But despite what I learned during my conversion, I was at a loss as to how to jump-start my Judaism. I made weak stabs at a ritual or two: one time I tried to attach a *mezuzah* to our door post, but of the handful of Jews present, none knew the prayer. On another occasion, I tried to have a seder, but again my Jewish guests were as ignorant as myself.

Turning up at a shul was even more intimidating. Passing by synagogues, I felt paralyzed by my race. I felt wary and apprehensive. Some Jews treated me like a person. And others, like a *schvartze*.

On the whole, I'd had positive relationships with Jews before I met my husband-to-be. The first Jewish person in my life was Mrs. Brodsky, a lady my mother worked for. As Mama cleaned her Westchester mansion, Mrs. Brodsky encouraged this high-school-dropout mother-of-three to get an education. She told Mama that she was too smart to spend her life using a mop instead of her mind. Eventually, my mother took Mrs. Brodsky's advice all the way to a college degree. I met my first Jewish friends, Ellen Sandberg and Robin Muntner, in the sixth grade, when I went to live with my aunt in Canarsie. We became a trio and remained close that whole year. Cecily Salzman, my 10th grade English teacher, gave me precious moments of her time many years after I was no longer her student. And at Erasmus Hall High School, another teacher, Linda Fisher, helped me through a crisis, even as I was a bottle-a-day Excedrin headache to her. I felt comfortable with these Jewish women. When I was a teenager, I thought all Jewish people were like them. In fact, I didn't think of Jews as white people at all. Jews, I believed, didn't have the racism disease that white people had. I was 20 when I discovered that they did.

Marty's parents did not want to meet the black woman he was seeing. I was barred from their home. As my relationship with Marty developed, I had emotional telephone confrontations with his parents. They made lame protestations. "And what if you have children? No one will accept them!" I felt diminished. The battles were constant. Each stripped me of a little bit more of my humanity. Toni Morrison, in *Beloved*, speaks of white people's fear of blackness. But this thing that they fear and hate, she says, is lodged in themselves. I copied down Morrison's words and sent them to Marty's father, who, I thought, was less committed to our race war. Morrison's words had some effect. At least for a while, outright hostilities ceased.

Still, I was getting along well with Marty's sister, Patty. A few months before her wedding, which took place a year

In Judaism I found the articulation of ideas that used to hover somewhere in the back of my mind, unformed.

before ours, we invited her and her fiancé over for dinner. After we had eaten, she asked me not to attend. Me, not Marty. If I were invited, she said, her parents would not pay for it."But I wanted to ask if you would let Marty come without you," Patty said, with my chicken on her breath.

Despite that bitter request, the wedding invitation arrived addressed to both Marty and me. But when it came time to take pictures, his family excluded me. They did not want my dark brown face to deface their memories.

Marty's family continued to hurt me even after we were married. Family members made insensitive comments about my wearing African prints. They said that I was cool to them. That I acted like I had a "chip."

My heart and my skin remember those experiences. When my husband asked me to sign his parents' birthday cards, I refused. Our daughter, age 6, wanted to know why. "Mommy, maybe you would get along if you tried to be nicer to them," she said. She was too young to understand that a family she loved had put me through agonizing racial trauma, and that her innocent words refreshed a pain that is never far away.

I did not choose this grief. It came with my skin. Jews, of all people, should know the pain of being punished for Who They Are. Marty has said, "Get over it." In my head, I answer, "F-k you!" This forgiveness is in my time, not his. So far I have succeeded in tamping my anger, and hiding behind equanimity, because I love Marty and our daughter, Eliane, and these people are their family. His parents, too, have mellowed over the years. They treat me kindly. We can hug each other now without cringing, though their damage is indelible, like ink.

Still, I remain committed to Judaism. I am a Jew with travelling shoes. The road rose up under my feet long before

I realized where I was going. Judaism, a system of ethics and values that I believe in, chose me. My travels have taught me that even Jews with no religious inclination unconsciously subscribe to a Jewish moral code. My Christian background began and ended with faith. You believed, or you burned in hell. But Judaism makes no such demand. We Jews do not have to believe, but behave, justly and righteously. In Judaism I found the articulation of ideas that used to hover somewhere in the back of my mind, unformed.

Rebecca Walker, daughter of a black mother and a Jewish father, in her recently-published biography *Black, White and Jewish* (see p.16), writes that she does not feel an affinity with what Jewishness has become. But what does Walker know about Jewishness? Yes, she lived in a Jewish home for years at a time, went to Jewish summer camp, had Jewish friends. But she has no identifiable Jewish values. Walker's decision to excise her Jewishness as a solution to her identity angst is based on the false premise that she is both black and Jewish.

I am black and Jewish. I am immersed in Judaism. These days, as I prepare a handbook of Shabbat prayers for novices, I am learning the service. As I assist our congregants, I expand my own knowledge of lifecycle events. I'm discovering Jewish obligations like giving *tzedakah*, performing *mitzvot*, and *tikkun olam*. I am studying Hebrew, taking classes for my adult bat mitzvah. My daughter, a third grader in public school, is in the *Gimmel* class at Hebrew school. Last January, she was consecrated along with her class. Eliane is way ahead of me. She already knows the entire Shabbat service. I am still struggling.

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WRITING ABOUT RACE

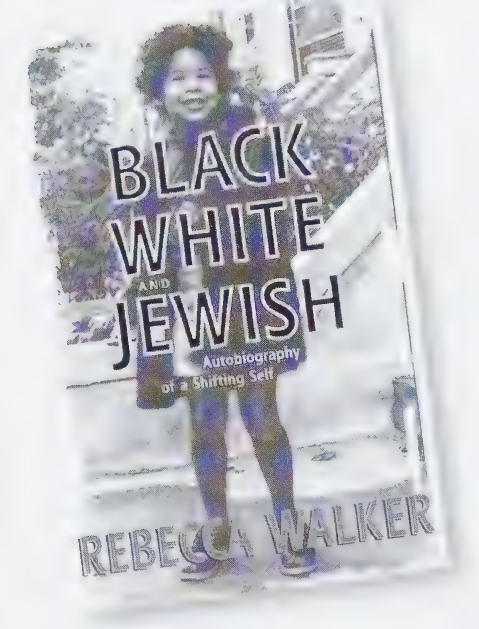
Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement, edited by Constance Curry, University of Georgia Press, $29.95
What Are You? Voices of Mixed-Race Young People, edited by Pearl Fuyo Gaskins, Henry Holt and Company, $18.95
Going South: Jewish Women in the Civil Rights Movement, by Debra L. Schultz, New York University Press, $26.95

ISSUES OF CLASS, RACE AND GENDER share center stage in the essays that make up *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement*. In these long, carefully crafted pieces, white women from a variety of backgrounds—working-class and upper-middle-class, Bronx Italian and Boston Jewish, Tennessee Methodist and Minnesota German—recall the early experiences that led them to the Freedom Movement, their work in it, and the life paths that they subsequently followed.

The essays benefit from the perspective of age, as well as from the fact that each author is political to her core. "If [sense of place] has to do with feeling at home, or secure, or belonging, then mine lies in the Beloved Community and Freedom Movement of the early sixties, with our vision of a truly integrated society," writes Constance Curry.

These were not women who merely dallied in the world of activism in their youth: after leaving the South, most went on to construct adult lives centered around work in social

(continued on page 17)



Portrayed, or Betrayed?

How Jewish Women fare in Rebecca Walker's *Black, White and Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self*

BY CHARLOTTE HONIGMAN-SMITH

"She said it. She said she was Jewish." When I heard that Rebecca Walker, daughter of Alice, had written a book about her childhood and titled it *Black, White, and Jewish*, those were the first words out of my mouth. I was amazed by the pride and relief I felt. Walker is the daughter of a feminist icon, she is a famous activist my own age...how could the book not be fabulous? But that she called herself Jewish, and put it in the title of her book, was precious to me for two reasons.

I was hopeful that the book might begin the public discussion of Jewish identity by the mixed-marriage children of my generation. I imagined that what Walker had to say about herself as a patrilineal Jew would inspire this.

I also imagined that Walker would present a Jewish identity that would blast the entrenched image of the JAP. Surely Mel Leventhal's daughter would have something to say to those who imagine that any Jewish woman involved in social action is a departure from the norm.

That was my fantasy, the book I wanted Rebecca Walker to have written. The reality is less nuanced. *Black, White, and Jewish* has an exquisite sense of detail and memory; her life unfolds as a series of parental abandonments and experimentation with sex and drugs and racial identity. But, though the writing is vivid and, at times, magical, there are problems with this book that language can't solve.

When Mel Leventhal married Alice Walker, a black woman, in 1966, his mother sat shiva. Though her grandmother later acknowledged her son's family and tried to play a role in her granddaughter's life, Rebecca's relationship to her father and his family remained complex and painful. Walker's father and stepmother sent her to a ritzy Jewish summer camp, and eventually moved when she was in her early teens to an affluent, white, largely Jewish area. The move did much to hurt their relationship with Rebecca, who found the suburban neighborhood racist and bourgeois.

Unfortunately, Walker believes that their conformity and wealth was, and is, typically Jewish, and when writing about her life with the Leventhals she uses ugly, unabashed stereotypes about Jewish life and, in particular, Jewish women.

Where is the book I *wanted* Rebecca Walker to have written?

Of the move, she writes: "I don't know at the time that it is, like, the Jewish dream to live in the suburbs, as close to Scarsdale as possible; to have a Volvo or two in the garage next to the kids' bikes and baseball gear; to eat Dannon yogurt and bagels every Sunday and light Shabbat candles on Friday night..."

Walker's portrayal of Jews in the second half of the book is unexamined, irresponsible, and almost comically stereotypical. The girls at camp are wealthy and spoiled. Neurosis is almost the only Jewish trait she will admit to in herself. She describes herself as locked in combat with her "white, holier-than-thou perfect Jewish stepmother" over her father's soul, "my brown body pulling him down memory lane to a past more sensual and righteous, she scratching the dirt off pale Jewish roots I didn't know he had." No Jewish men except her father become characters in the book, and Jewish women are uniformly wealthy and shallow. In the end she escapes to bohemian righteousness.

Exasperatingly, Walker never bothers to acknowledge her own economic privilege, or the advantages that come from being her mother's daughter. She eloquently describes the impact of racism on her expensive private high school education, her art museum internship, and extensive world travel, but never appears to realize that she has these things because she is a child from a fairly wealthy background, and the daughter of an internationally famous novelist. It's hard to take it seriously when she writes, "when I am at camp I wear Capezios and Guess jeans and Lacoste shirts, and I assume the appropriate air of petulant entitlement," but feels she's "a Jap but not one. I know *baruch atah Adonai Elohainu*...but I don't own fifty LeSportsacs or spend the week before camp starts on a Teen Tour in Israel." Given Walker's unwillingness to acknowledge her own privilege, her contempt for the "Jewish dream" of the house and two cars in the suburbs seems self-serving.

By the end of the book, Walker declares that she feels no connection "with whiteness, with what Jewishness has become." I cannot see any indication in this book that she has any right to say "what Jewishness has become."

Although she writes that on the subway "surrounded by Hasidim crouched xenophobically over their Bibles, I have to sit on my hands and bite my tongue to keep from shouting out 'I know your story!'" it doesn't seem that she does. "I don't feel loyalty," she continues, "as much as an irrational, childlike desire to burst their suffocating illusions of purity." This isn't childlike, it's childish, and apparently based on nothing but an assumption that traditional-

ly dressed Jews (crouching a la Shylock) would be horrified by the child of a racially mixed marriage.

Because of the power of her mother's name and her own reputation as an activist, Walker's prepackaged anti-Semitic invocation of the JAP and the spoiled manipulative Jewish wife will have a profound impact on young American feminists. The common assumption that "normal" Jews are materialistic, conformist and uniformly wealthy has just been given new fuel by a woman *Time magazine* calls a leader of my generation. I am deeply angry, and apprehensive about what this will mean for young Jewish women.

This book is being extensively promoted and reviewed in venues ranging from the New York Times to InterfaithFamily.com, and it carries a famous name. Amazon promotes the reading guide Riverhead Books has prepared for it, and a chapter has been excerpted for the Washington Post Salon website. It will be widely read in women's and ethnic studies classrooms. It will be read by women who will feel justified in their stereotypes of Jewish women, since Rebecca Walker (Jewish herself) confirms them. It will be read by Jewish women who will have to defend their cultures, languages and experiences against a cultural icon's sweeping anti-Semitic stereotypes. If this is the voice of the third wave, young Jewish women had better beware. We are not welcome here.

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Writing About Race *(continued from page 15)*

justice, health care, and education, with continuing political affiliations as diverse as the Vermont Progressive Party, the West Virginia Governor's Race Initiative, and the People's National Party of Jamaica. Because each woman has manifestly put her money where her mouth is, the group can speak with authority on the immensely difficult issues of race, class, gender and justice that they confronted during their years in—and their departures from—the Freedom Movement.

As it happens, Elaine DeLott Baker is the only Jewish woman included in this collection. (Baker is also one of the featured interviewees in *Going South*, which was previewed in Lilith last year. This book focuses on the specific experiences of Jewish women in the Movement.) Ultimately, however, her account is in no way different from those of her co-authors. What is notable about *Deep in Our Hearts* is how thoroughly these women's feminism, politicization, and experiences of Movement life transcended the various ethnic and religious backgrounds from which they came. Even their childhoods and family histories are recalled most compellingly through the lens of the authors' evolving thinking about race, class and gender, and that focus is what gives *Deep in Our Hearts* its true import. "My closet was filled with the requisite long dance dresses and crinoline petticoats, but I was inwardly preoccupied with issues of social justice and the moral teachings of the church," writes Texas native Dorothy Dawson Burlage, who helped create Students for a Democratic Society. "I kept struggling with the contradictions between the messages I heard about segregation and the ones I heard in church about love and brotherhood, justice and righteousness."

One of the forces that has quietly shaken the foundations of racism in America during the last 50 years has been interracial marriage. The landscape for intermarried couples and families has evolved radically during that time: the last state anti-miscegenation laws, after all, were still in force as late as 1967. By contrast, the 1980s and '90s witnessed not only burgeoning numbers of interracial and multiethnic relationships and families but also the flowering of political and social movements centered around protecting multicultural interests in a society still pervaded by bias.

As the newly adopted multi-race categories on U.S. census forms demonstrate, a key question has arisen regarding how society classifies mixed-race and multi-ethnic Americans and how they identify themselves. One of the most interesting recent books to address that question is *What Are You?*, edited by Pearl Fuyo Gaskins. The book presents first-person writing on multiracial and multiethnic identity by eighty young people, most of them in their late teens and early twenties.

Gaskins herself is biracial (European-American and Japanese), and hits all of the key notes in discussing mixed identity. The contributors come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, and only one woman, Jennifer Chau, identifies herself as having a Jewish parent and writes about the specific experience of being biracial (half Chinese, in this case) in a Jewish religious context. Chau tells of her Chinese-American father being prohibited from coming to the altar at her Bat Mitzvah, and her own meetings with her rabbi, years later, to discuss the bias she had experienced.

Although all of these writers have experienced racism, they refuse to be pigeonholed. "I try not to let what other people think of me define me," writes Amanda Holzhauer, who is African-American and Swiss-German-American. "I refuse to limit myself in the way they want me to." What's more, they resist being branded as exotic, because they know how rapidly their own numbers are now growing. "People say that mixed people are [physically] beautiful," writes Stefanie Liang, who is Chinese-American and German-American. "Our beauty is much deeper than that. What's beautiful about us is that we embody harmony and transcend racism in many ways." In these people's resilience, their realism, and their informed optimism, we see how richly some of the most important goals and dreams of the Freedom Movement are paying off.

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"I am their Text."

A College Student Struggles to Teach Jewish Feminist Values to Teen Girls

BY SOPHIE DANIS OBERFIELD

from my course proposal: The culture we live in demands many things of us as women and as Jews. In this class, we will read traditional texts to draw out issues as the basis for weekly discussion on topics as varied as abortion, body image, marriage and sexuality, egalitarianism in prayer, current American stereotypes of Jewish women, God language, and female characters in the Bible. We will build a safe place to discuss our own lives and how they interact with the Jewish tradition.

ILLUSTRATION BY KAREN STOLPER

FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS, I taught this course, called "Women in Jewish Text and Tradition," at Makom, an interdenominational Hebrew high school in New Haven, Connecticut. Initially, my goal for the class was to teach Jewish texts, and not my own feminist perspective on them. My class taught me the complexity involved in teaching texts I have complicated feelings about. Most importantly I have learned about who I am as a Jewish feminist, and about the difficult task of educating the next generation of Jewish women in a (so-called) post-feminist era.

One of the first things I was told by the principal at Makom is that Jewish educators are the primary texts for their students. They may not remember the specific words of *Pirkei Avot* or the names of major figures in pre-Inquisition Spain, but the students will remember their teachers' values and personalities. I have come to understand that I teach Torah through my own experience. As I live and learn, my relationship to Torah changes, and the text that I am changes too.

How did I come to be their teacher? I'm the product of a name-brand Conservative Jewish education: Solomon Schechter Day School, Camp Ramah, and the Jewish Theological Seminary's Prozdor Hebrew High School. As a Jew, I am literate enough, and curious enough, to be aware of how much there is in Judaism and how little of it I know. As a woman, my Jewish practice is egalitarian; I use a *tallit* and *tefilin* when I

On the third day of class, we talk about Feminism. "Are you a feminist?" I ask. "No way," says one girl, immediately. "Feminists are lesbians."

pray in the morning. I also cover my head when praying, learning Jewish texts, and making *brachot*, blessings, in order to show respect for what I am doing. I am the daughter of a Jewish feminist and, more generally, a Jewish feminist magazine. I think seriously of becoming a rabbi. I am committed to feminism, to Judaism, and to a feminist Judaism. All of these facts play a role in who I am, and not only what I teach but how I teach.

I think that teaching fundamental Jewish texts, like the Bible, Mishnah, Talmud or midrash, is one of the most important things that Jewish educators can do. I designed this course to be about women in Jewish texts, not about feminism. I wanted to introduce my students to classic texts that they might respond to in a positive way. For example, I hoped that showing high school girls the Song of Songs, the Biblical poem of erotic love, might give them a new framework for feeling happy about their bodies, or to think about how Judaism includes this vision of a happy, healthy, mutually respectful sexual relationship. I wanted to show my students that these texts have specific things to say to them about their concerns as developing young women, about their bodies, about sexuality, about morality and self-discovery in a Jewish context. I want the girls in my class to be able to talk about "teenage girl" things in a nonjudgmental Jewish context, as well as enabling them to talk about religious and spiritual things with their peers. I want them to leave the class proud to identify themselves as Jewish women, with all the complexity and struggle that title implies.

But Jewish writings are, of course, not all positive about women and I myself have a complicated relationship to the texts and the tradition. I know that there are classic Jewish writings that strongly discourage women from practices that are very meaningful to me and to many other Jewish women—for example, the way that I pray. At the same time, I am entirely committed to (and cannot imagine giving up) my Jewish practice: keeping kosher, observing Shabbat, praying every day. Teaching my perspective on the Torah—a perspective that is fraught with both love and criticism—becomes a very tricky process. As an educator, I was concerned not to force my own opinions on my students. I wanted to show them, as objectively as I could, what foundational Jewish documents have to say about women, in hopes that this would draw them into a critical *and* loving relationship with these texts.

Introducing myself to my students on the first day of class, I outline my Jewish observances for them, to help them know me. Though they have mostly become b'not mitzvah, the current Jewish experiences of my seventeen-year-old students are more social and educational than religious. I suddenly realize that with my daily prayer and *tefilin*, I must seem radically religious to them. I fear alienating my students, as more traditionally observant teachers (who took holier-than-thou tones with me about my own practices) alienated me in the past. I almost want to apologize for the extent of my religious observance, or tell them that I don't judge them for not having my level of observance. I also want to show them my Jewish commitment and feminist convictions which lead me to believe that they, like all Jews, ought to live observant lifestyles. I want to be confident but not coercive, and sometimes this is awkward. This is my first taste of the complexities involved in being a text.

On the third day of class, we talk about feminism. "Are you a feminist?" I ask. "No way," says one girl, immediately. "Feminists are lesbians."

Between Acceptance and Resistance

While there are countless ways to be a Jew and a feminist, there is one space that we all share. We accept the Jewish religion, culture and communties that nuture and sustain us, and at the same time we resist those elements of Jewish culture which try to limit our voices, our potential, or our self-respect. And so we each choreograph new dances in that space between acceptance and resistance.

The spaces in between acceptance and resistance can be places of invigorating energy and creativity, where women are reinventing ritual, forming communities, learning new ways of learning, listening, worshiping.

But these are also the spaces of uncertainty, of doubt, of defensiveness. We struggle against those who claim that our feminist Judaism is not authentic enough, against those who fear that any change in Judaism will break a sacred chain. We struggle against those same voices within ourselves.

We also struggle against those who ask us why we bother with a religion that is so patriarchal, with a community that is so resistant to feminism and other necessary and important changes. And we struggle against those same voices within ourselves.

Here we have the stories of two women finding their own ways to negotiate between the parts of Judaism that they embrace, and the parts that they challenge. Each of these women notes that is hard to remain in struggle, stepping carefully between what feels right to them as feminists, and what feels right to them as Jews. But each of these writers has also found beauty and meaning in this delicate negotiation. As we watch these carefully choreographed steps, we may discover a way to dance at our own revolution.

—Rachel Kranson

Other girls have more moderate responses, but no one identifies with feminism. "It seems angry," one explains. "What does it mean exactly?" I offer seeking equality of the sexes as a definition. "Yeah, well, that's not what feminist means to people though," another girl chimes in. I quote a T-shirt that was popular at my high school: "Feminism, the radical notion that women are people too." A third girl is very uncomfortable with the word "radical" and with anger in general, and we spend a while talking about how people associate feminism with anger.

I ask them if they see any inequalities in their immediate worlds, in high school. One notes how boys boast about their academic achievement with impunity, while girls who even talk about their high grades are considered "stuck up." There is much annoyed talk about double standards of sexual behavior; how guys get credit for flirting and having lots of girlfriends, but girls get blamed and derogated for the same behavior. Over the course of this one class, my students come to realize that many of their concerns are also the concerns of feminism. I feel proud of the class, that we have accomplished something good. I can see, in retrospect, how important it was to show them that feminism, as well as Judaism, can be inhabited and used, that it doesn't have to be a foreign set of stringent beliefs held by others.

We talk about the Jewish wedding ceremony—the process by which a man buys a woman with a ring, a document, or sexual intercourse. "That's what it means if you translate it?" one girl says incredulously. "Well, forget it, I'm not having a Jewish wedding." I hasten to add that this transactional view of marriage dates from the Bible, a time when "buying" a wife was a normal practice among the different world cultures. The Jewish wedding isn't more misogynistic than others from that time. "But people still do this?" the student persists. "Men still buy women?" It's symbolic, I add, all the while silently agreeing with her challenge. I share her qualms, but feel that my opinion will undermine a real understanding that this is the Aramaic of the normative Jewish wedding ceremony, even among egalitarian, liberal Jews.

We look together at prayers, the daily thanks some men give that God "did not make me a woman," and the female alternative, thanking God for "making me according to His will." We look at the arguments against women's reading of Torah aloud in public, which attributes possible humiliation to a community that acknowledges even one learned woman. And the argument against women's performing positive time-bound commandments, which classes women with minors and slaves. The girls are shocked. Though they've sat through several years of Jewish education they have never seen these texts before.

Next time, I wouldn't fear feminism as my own particular, embarrassing personal bias, but teach it as a basic element of the culture in which we are living today.

We deal briefly with divorce and its attendant *agunah* problem. A student objects to the way the man has all the power there, how Judaism can "trap you if you care about it," since a man can refuse his wife a Jewish writ of divorce, keeping her from making a second, legal Jewish marriage, while he himself is free to remarry. We look at Jewish attitudes towards menstruation, or female ritual impurity. Certainly the girls see the merits of having time to oneself during menstruation, but several students complain that this separation is not fair, especially considering the fact that impurity was also originally—but not longer—associated with men who ejaculate.

"That's what it means if you translate it?" one girl asks incredulously. "Well, forget it, I'm not having a Jewish wedding."

Negative feelings are building up. No one is giving up on the religion or the people, but my students are becoming increasingly skeptical about the relevance of these traditional texts in their lives. "Judaism says *that*?" my students say over and over. "Maybe for *them*, but not for *me*," one of them declares. The girls are detached and even dismissive rather than angry. One of the girls tells the class that she is planning on choosing which religion she'll affiliate with when she's eighteen and independent. Judaism, for her, is arbitrary, optional, and maybe even temporary; not something to get upset about. This makes me sad.

I decide to teach one class on Orthodox feminist ideas in hopes of showing my students a positive articulation of women's role in traditional Judaism. But Orthodox feminism turns out to be unintelligible to my students. They cannot relate to the total Jewish commitment which seems to subordinate Orthodox women. My students can't understand why women would focus on improving their second class status rather than seeking equality. We end up talking about ultra-Orthodox practices, modesty in dress, head coverings My students react like detached anthropologists; they don't identify with these Jewish women. "They live in a completely different world from us, with totally different values and priorities," explains one of my students, "They look really backwards to us, but we look really sinful to them."

. . . And Before Girls Become Teenagers. . .

Holding workshops for pre-bat mitzvah age daughters and their mothers is a wonderful avenue for exposing girls to Jewish feminism without ever having to be preachy and without having to prove to them that there is still a need for feminism (it just emerges as obvious). I think the age is a perfect one because it's still before the hardest stage of adolescence, just on the cusp of so much change, but not yet the point at which girls are losing their voices and self-esteem. Also, bat mitzvah is something that has not always existed for girls, and talking about that fact is a starting point for talking about the different histories of Jewish female and Jewish male adulthood.

At pre-bat mitzvah workshops sponsored by Ma'yan, the Jewish women's project at the JCC on the Upper West Side of New York City, we also exposed girls preparing for bat mitzvah to issues of feminine God language. The method is everything. I asked the girls to share their own experiences of when and why they pray. I asked them to brainstorm adjectives that describe what they are seeking when they pray and then, from those adjectives, we developed new images and names for God. Only then did I bring in, as a question, the contradiction between the multiplicity of metaphors we had just brainstormed and the limited nature of the word and image King of the World. I guess what I find works best is doing feminism before talking about it, doing it in such a way that people will say, yes, of course, this makes sense, and then, only after that, telling them that this stuff that makes sense-that's feminism.

— TAMARA COHEN

I am unhappy watching my students respond in this way to people who are, like them, both Jewish and female. The last thing I want to do is make them feel alienated from other Jewish women, especially other Jewishly committed women. I want them to feel ownership of Jewish texts and understand that these texts are the legacy of all Jews, so that they can understand the different choices open to them as Jewish women. And I want them to respect the rhythms and practices of Orthodox Jewish women, even if these are not part of a lifestyle that they would choose for themselves.

Afterwards my students tell me that they enjoyed the course. They liked having an all-female class, and they learned something about what classic Jewish texts say about women. I have learned that teaching Torah is not simple, that Rashi's concept of the Torah having seventy faces is a crucial one. There are many different perspectives on Jewish texts.

I am leaving New Haven, graduating, and I'm sad that I won't be able to teach this course again soon. I would love to apply what I've learned to the task of teaching this subject matter again.

I would present the many different ways of understanding the intersection between "Jewish" and "woman." Rather than expecting that my students would intuit and make a commitment to both Judaism and feminism, I'd present them with the experiences of the many women out there who are living these commitments in different ways. I wouldn't fear feminism as my own particular, embarrassing personal bias, but teach it as a basic element of the culture in which we are living today. Feminism would be a theme of the class; the way that each manifestation of the Jewish female experience is responding, in some way, to twentieth-century calls for the equality of women and men. I would start with a short unit of Biblical and Talmud texts to outline the views of women from the perspective of tradition. But the class could not end there. I would look at women's Rosh Chodesh groups, at the decision to ordain female rabbis in the Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative movements. I would look at Orthodox women's prayer groups, and the new Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance. I would also have us read excerpts from different Jewish feminist writings: Blu Greenberg's *On Women and Judaism*, Judith Plaskow's *Standing Again at Sinai*, Haviva Ner-David's *Life on the Fringes*, Rachel Adler's *Engendering Judaism*. In this framework, I would be comfortable presenting my own practices and beliefs as one of many different approaches that Jewish women take to find (or develop) meaningful religious experiences.

The girls are shocked. Though they've sat through several years of Jewish education (they had to in order to have a bat mitzvah ceremony), they have never seen these texts before.

It is a constant struggle for me to forge a strong, specifically egalitarian Jewish identity, while also accepting as equally valid—in the interest of Jewish feminist solidarity—the practices and expressions of every other Jewish woman. This is a feminist project: to build identity without recreating categories of oppression and hierarchy, without entering into debates about who is the more authentic Jew. My membership in the community of Jewish women, and all of Israel, is as important to me as my *tefilin*; I am not willing to give either up. The best way I can think of to teach the next generation of young Jewish women is to show them all sides of this struggle. Maybe I would call this class "The Seventy Faces of Women in Judaism."

SOPHIE DANIS OBERFIELD GRADUATED IN MAY FROM YALE, AND IS GOING ON TO STUDY AT THE YESHIVA OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM IN JERUSALEM.

Taking Back Our Rites

Lighting Candles, Baking Challah, and the Laws of Married Sex

BY YISKAH ROSENFELD

Not long after my bat mitzvah, I decided that rather than staring into space during the silent readings in synagogue services, I would see what the prayerbook had to say. That's how I discovered this brief text crouching between *Lekha Dodi* and the beginning of the Friday evening service:

For three transgressions women die during childbirth: for being careless regarding the precept of niddah (separation during menstruation followed by ritual immersion in a mikvah), the precept of challah (removing a piece for tithing), and the precept of kindling the Sabbath light. (Mishnah Shabbat 2:6)

My cultural Jewish upbringing in a small, rabbi-less town in Kansas, even with summers spent at a Conservative camp and my mother's new interest in lighting Shabbat candles in my grandmother's candlesticks, left me unprepared. The footnotes informed me that this was a *mishnah*, a segment of Jewish legal discussion recorded around the second century. From that Sabbath eve, I struggled to come to terms with a religion that could find death in childbirth a fair punishment for anything, much less the few rituals traditionally performed by women.

The paradox of my love for Jewish ritual and tradition and my horror at texts such as this eventually led me to Israel to study. Kicked out of a program in Safed for being a "feminist" and a "troublemaker" (apparently synonyms), I found my way to the Pardes Institute in Jerusalem, a traditional but tolerant yeshiva. In Israel, I found even greater depth and power in lighting the Sabbath candles as the city slowed and quieted; I learned to knead and bake my own challah; and I dipped in the ancient Ari mikvah in Safed at midnight, while a group of women sang softly to guard the entrance. But while I argued fervently in class against sexist and offensive texts, I found that staring into space like a teenager during the silent reading before the evening service was the only way I could keep my faith whole. Over the years, my level of observance waxed and waned, and I made peace with the unfolding path of my Jewish practice. Eventually I became a Jewish educator; the students in my classes ranging from the estranged to Orthodox, with the occasional curious pagan or Catholic. (I identified with them all.) And then, while preparing a class, the mishnah that had shocked me so long ago came back to haunt me when I stumbled across this commentary about Eve:

And why was the precept of niddah given to her? Because she shed the blood of Adam. And why was the precept of challah given to her? Because she corrupted Adam, who was the challah of the world. And why was the precept of lighting the Sabbath candles given to her? Because she extinguished the soul of Adam. (Genesis Rabbah 17:8)

In a few lines, the Rabbis all but extinguished my joy in observing these rituals. Lighting candles and baking challah had always been particularly meaningful to me, as I imagined my hands following the motions of centuries of Jewish women. Under normal circumstances, I would relish the idea of Eve participating, too, though I knew that these traditions developed much later than the story of Eve in Eden.

As if it wasn't bad enough that transgressing these rituals was punishable by death in childbirth, I now learned that the rituals themselves were meant as atonement for an alleged earlier sin, that of Eve eating the forbidden fruit. Eve's act, which I had come to view as brave and intelligent, was now reduced to first-degree murder. According to this commentary, candlelighting, challah and mikvah, three sacred and joyful women's rituals celebrated since Temple times, were given to us not because of the qualities we share in common with the beauty and mystery of light, bread and living waters, but because of how much we are not like them.

Once again I was 13 years old, wanting to forget what I'd read so I could simply enjoy the pleasures of Jewish ritual and community. And why not? I wasn't an observant Jew. A typical Shabbat for me involved turning off the phone, lighting candles an hour or two after dark, and driving off to services or to the movies. But I could no longer turn my head from the page. I had no investment in making excuses for the Rabbis, who centuries ago shaped Jewish tradition, but I did feel a strong responsibility, as a Jew and a woman, to wrestle with and transform this tradition. I needed to know: what was going on here? Why did the Rabbis bother to go so far out of their way to say something so reproachable? Why link these three acts with death? Why specifically death while bringing in life? Why hearken back to Eve, rather than the first mother of Jewish history, Sarah?

Disturbing though they may be, the texts do serve to highlight, perhaps inadvertently, the supreme importance of these rituals. Why else would the Rabbis work so hard to link them all the way back to the Garden of Eden, and, even more significantly, to attach to their violation such harsh punishment? If they were just ritual leftovers of little importance, the Rabbis would not need to rely on such an enormous threat to ensure their proper practice. Clearly, the Rabbis are concerned because they recognize how very central candlelighting, niddah and challah are to Jewish life. Marking the beginning of the Sabbath is no small task; by giving women this ritual Judaism effectively gives women the power to call the Sabbath into being. The mitzvah of challah, referring to the tithing of a portion of the challah dough for the Priests, now symbolically burned, is also a significant act of community responsibility. And to observant Jews, the Biblical precept of niddah provides the underlying pulse and cycle of family relations.

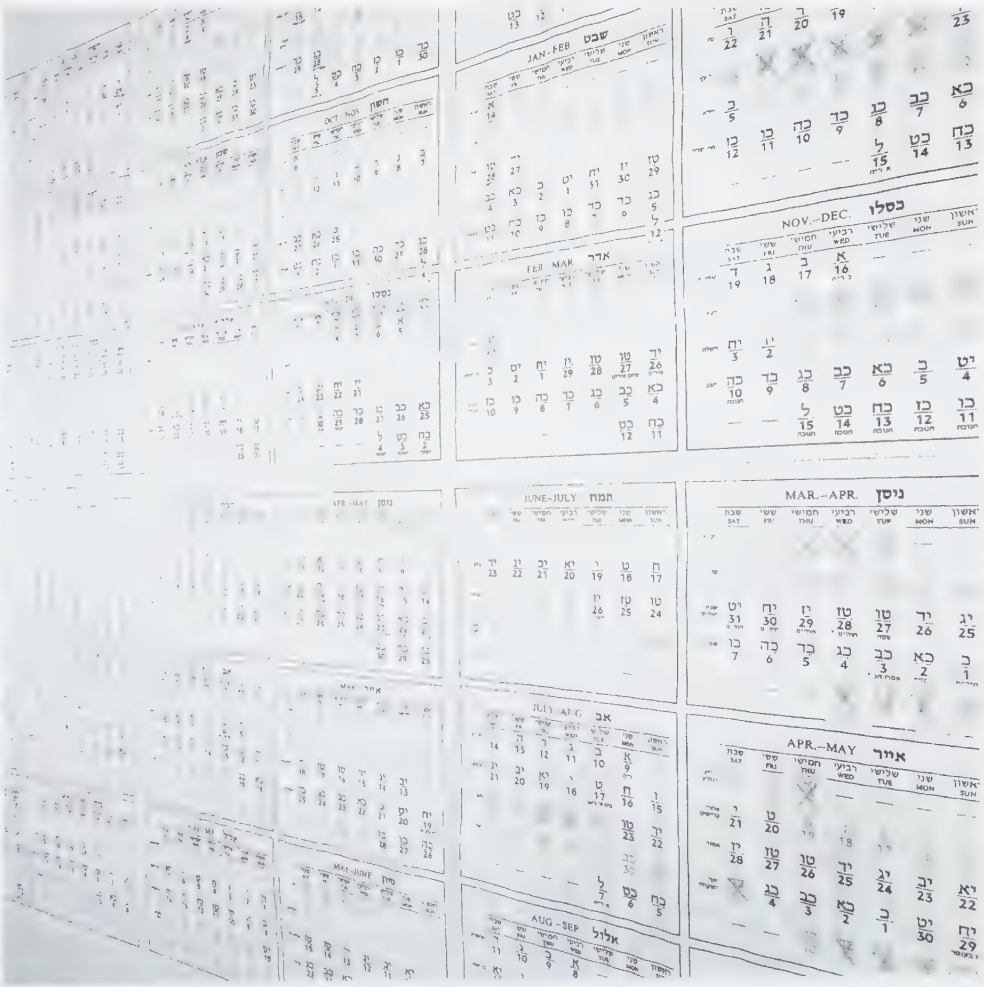
Important rituals were turned into acts of repentance, rather than rewards.

That the fate of these important rituals lay in the hands and hearts of women must have generated a bitter combination of jealousy and helplessness in the Rabbis. Still, given that traditionally Jewish women have so little participation in the domain of ritual, you'd think the men could have been more gracious about the few rites entrusted to us. Rather than taking the opportunity to praise women for being chosen to carry out these rituals, the Rabbis needed a reason why women were obligated to do something they were not. Therefore, important rituals were turned into acts of repentance, rather than rewards. And by hanging an outrageously severe punishment over women's heads if they did not fulfill their duties, they did their best to assert some control.

"My Bridal Chamber"

Artist, Heléne Aylon takes the subject of Jewish ritual purity for women—often a taboo subject in the ultra-Orthodox world in which Aylon was raised—and brings it into a public arena. The artist embraces the practice while challenging "the patriarchal coding and defining of this ancient female tradition." She says that her installations "shine a feminist lens onto ancient texts and practices that omit or deny the presence and the input of women." Her work hangs in the Museum of Modern Art and the Jewish Museum in New York, among other collections in the U.S. and Israel.

"My Marriage Bed" (opposite) is made of white handkerchiefs, a reference to a woman's using a hanky to ascertain seven perfectly "clean" days after her menstrual period. The back of the headboard shows what Aylon calls "problematic" texts in Leviticus and the Talmud. "My Clean Days" (right) is a 24-foot calendar of the decade of her marriage to an Orthodox rabbi, delineating her menstrual cycle. Each work includes a written "Proclamation" declaring the artist's motivation and intention; for "Clean Days," Aylon writes: "This I know: The term 'unclean' came from those who do not bleed." The installation is at the DC Jewish Community Center in Washington through September 2. "My Notebooks, 2000" will open at Brandeis University's Women's Studies Research Center on September 6.



Punishing a woman in childbirth is a way to establish control over the greatest act men cannot accomplish.

But it seems that something even more powerful was at stake than jealousy regarding this tiny, tiny, tiny territory of Jewish ritual. I do not think it is accidental that the punishment relates to a woman's experience of childbirth. Punishing a woman in childbirth is a way to establish control over the greatest act men cannot accomplish. And while the Rabbis connect these rituals to death — that of Adam, and that, potentially, of any woman who fails to carry them out — it seems that what is really at stake here is the woman's power to create life. Could it be that these rituals hold powerful ties to life and death, to the inexplicable mystery of life, in a way that frightened or threatened the Rabbis? The lighting of the Sabbath candles does take us back to the creation of the world, to the exact moment of G-d's completion of birthing the world. Challah also reminds us of the power of creativity in the process of transformation that occurs in baking, one that mimics the bringing of a golem to life. The laws of niddah delve into the cycle of menstruation, the rhythms of fertility, the potential for life. And the mikvah is itself a symbol of the womb, of eternal life and renewal, drawing us back to the rivers in the Garden of Eden.

No wonder the Rabbis were terrified! If these rituals have anything to do with death, it is by virtue of their very potent, almost magical, connection to life. Eve brought us death as a necessary consequence of bringing us life and the power to create life. Her name in Hebrew, Chava, means life, and she is thus named by Adam because "she is the mother of all living things." Without Eve we might be still be held within the womb of the garden. Eve herself did, in a way, "die" in childbirth. While giving birth to the generations of humanity through her children, while being "birthed" from the womb of the garden, she accepted her own mortality as a necessary price.

The Rabbis want us to think women are assigned these rituals as a sort of punishment, a reminder of our sinful nature. But it seems more natural to view them as rewards, precious gifts entrusted to women for safekeeping in honor of Eve's momentous act. Rather than viewing the rituals as tainted by sin and death, Jewish women might empower them to invoke creativity or fertility, to take us back to the garden and women's power from the beginning to birth the world, and birth ourselves anew each month.

Together they form an almost magical triangle, balanced and strong, providing a complex female map of creativity and completion. All three are markers of time, tracing weekly and moonly/monthly circles rather than historical lines.

But each has a particularly physical, almost visceral component, marking space as well. These elements comprise the necessary components for creating life: air and fire in the candlelighting, the earth in challah, water in the mikvah. Perhaps these rituals might serve as moments of prayer for women struggling to conceive, or times of reflection on the awesome creative power of all women. The kindling of the Sabbath candles might be a moment to think about carving out a time of rest in our over-committed schedules. And as we knead and shape the challah (or stand in line at the market waiting to purchase it), we might reflect on new creative projects, or how to create the kind of life we want for ourselves and our families.

The Rabbis plant these rituals in the relationship between Eve and Adam, implying that they signify women's relationship to men. While it is true that these rituals hold intimate connections to the household, the problem is that the Rabbis try to ensure they stay exclusively in that realm.

And yet these rituals reverberate far beyond the scope of family. Lighting candles draws family together, but it is also connects us to G-d, welcoming the Shekhina, the feminine aspect of G-d who dwells with us on the Sabbath. While challah may also be seen as a "home-bound" mitzvah, the law of tithing symbolizes a woman's responsibility to community and tzedakah. Niddah traditionally represents a woman's relationship to her husband, but anyone who has experienced a mikvah knows of the intimate relationship of women to women at this private sanctuary away from the duties of family, and of the essential relationship to the self provided by the separation and wholly private nature of this ritual.

What all three rituals hold in common is the power of transformation.

While I will never be able to chant, "For three transgressions women die in childbirth. . ." either silently or out loud, and while my Jewish practice continues to evolve, I am glad I chose to confront these traditional texts about women's rituals. Ultimately what all three rituals hold in common is the power of transformation—turning ordinary time into sacred time, transforming flour and eggs into a beautifully braided and risen bread, emerging from the mikvah changed and renewed. It is my hope that this same power of transformation can be used in our approach to Jewish text and tradition. Whatever our level of observance, only through the transformation of Jewish text and tradition can we stay connected to our Jewish past without sacrificing our feminist present and, ultimately, the future of both.

May no one woman ever die in childbirth for carelessness in niddah, challah or candle lighting. But may each woman who chooses to kindle the Sabbath lights, to set aside a portion of the challah she bakes, to dip in ritual waters, create something new: a sacred time, a child, a new perspective, herself.

JESSICA (YISKAH) ROSENFELD, AN AWARD-WINNING POET, TEACHES WORKSHOPS COMBINING JEWISH MYSTICISM, RITUAL AND CREATIVE WRITING IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA.

RUTH

BY JENNIFER THOMAS

There is a richness to this land still uncollected.
I am known by the slim gleanings,
orderly remnant of stalks
haunting the path of the scythe,
whisper of full head of grain's random sway.

Rattling of metal,
swoosh of blade against stem,
'round and 'round:
the sound you loved as a child—
of ocean in shell or lacking that,
cupped hand over ear
or empty jar even,
anything to replicate
wave upon wave against shore.

At night, ceaselessly humming,
in slowed repetition of busy-ness
echoes of reaping
become low tones of my fathers' voices
around nightly campfires
and I am called back to Moab.

I turn against such fatherly insistence
as every face in memory expands
into unrecognizable patterns
of light and dark.
I turn against that night.

There is a hush on the far side
of the mown field.
a stillness of ancestors
who yet defy their rest.
If I could lay one night
in that cool dampness
I would not be swayed
by a far country,
or by knife against shaft,
the necessary cutting which feeds.

Slow now the whorls of reaping,
turn down to roots
uncommon and tangled.
We might let this embrace,
if nothing else,
serve as a common heritage
and go on.

JENNIFER THOMAS LIVES IN RURAL VERMONT. SHE HAS A LONG ASSOCIATION WITH THE FROST PLACE IN FRANCONIA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, A WRITERS' CONFERENCE AT ONE OF ROBERT FROST'S FARMS.

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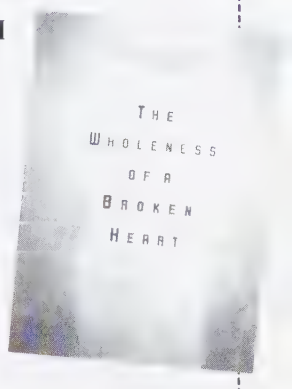

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I was brought up to think being thin... like I'd say, "Mom, have a piece of cake," and she'd be like, "No, I'm on a diet." So I mean, I've known diets since I was in kindergarten. Tina, Age 14

BY MIMI NICHTER

Fat Talk

THE QUOTE ABOVE, WHICH IS from one of the interviews I conducted for my book *Fat Talk: What Girls and their Parents Say about Dieting* reminds me of my own childhood, growing up in a Jewish home in Brooklyn with a mother who was always either actively dieting or searching for dieting tips in the pages of Ladies Home Journal or Good Housekeeping.

For my mother, who was first generation and had grown up on the Lower East Side, having the right body was an important part of fitting in.

Although attentive to her own weight, she was not overly concerned when I gained about twenty pounds during puberty. She didn't impose her diets on me. When I complained about my weight, she told me I was going through a stage and that I would outgrow it. By age 15, I was still waiting impatiently for "it" to melt away. I knew that my older sister had gotten diet pills from our family doctor, and when I asked my mother if I could get them too, her approval was clear. She immediately called and made an appointment for me. After taking amphetamines for a month, I experienced a newfound pride in my thinner body. Like my mother and sister, I wanted a body that would mark us as somehow different from the rounded bodies that characterized my grandmother's generation. I had received a message about Jewish women, weight and our relationship to food that was to stay with me for many years to come.

African-American girls were notably **less** concerned than their white counterparts with the standards **for an "ideal girl"** depicted in the media.

Here are excerpts from what I say in a chapter called "Looking Good among African-American Girls":

● My readings on the subject showed that African American girls were more satisfied with their body weight and were less likely to diet than white or Latino girls. But there were few explanations given for why these ethnic differences existed, although the reports all made vague references to "cultural factors." As anthropologists interested in the culture of teenage girls, we wanted to explore what led African-American girls to accept their body shape while so many of their white peers were dissatisfied with theirs.

In **contrast**, white girls received support for **altering** their looks to fit established beauty ideals.

● Nationwide survey results indicate that, in contrast to African-American girls, white and Latino girls perceive themselves to be overweight even when their weight falls within "normal" parameters for their height as established by the National Center for Health Statistics. As they get older, white girls express increasing dissatisfaction with themselves, whereas African-American girls report a relatively stable and positive sense of self-worth.

● [However] drawing on in-depth interviews with African-American and Latino women, sociologist Becky Thompson highlights the risk of generalizing about class and thinness among women of color. The diversity of experiences among the women she interviewed makes it clear that African-American and Latino women may be equally vulnerable to the emphasis on thinness. "Media presentation in even the most remote areas of the country," writes Thompson, "makes it unlikely that any ethnic or racial group is unaware of the premium placed on dieting and thinness."

- In order to assess differences between white and African-American girls with regard to weight related issues, we compared responses to the survey question, "How satisfied are you with your weight?" Responses show distinct differences between the two groups. Seventy percent of the African-American girls responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their current weight. While 82 percent of these girls were at or below the normal weight-for-height range of African-American girls their age, 18 percent were significantly overweight (defined as above the eighty fifth percentile). Only 15 percent of the girls who were of normal weight expressed dissatisfaction with their present weight. By contrast, a similar survey question about body shape directed at white girls revealed that almost 90 percent were dissatisfied with their bodies.
- Girls wrote comments such as: "White girls have to look like Barbie dolls and Cindy Crawford to be beautiful," and "White girls want to be perfect." African-American girls noted that "their attitudes and the way they wear their clothes is different," and that white girls "want to be tall, thin, and have long hair."
- When we asked the African-American girls for their description of an ideal black girl, their response often began with a list of personality traits rather than physical attributes. .... What was particularly striking in African-American girls' descriptions, when compared with those of white adolescents, was the deemphasis on external beauty as a prerequisite for popularity.
- African-American girls were notably less concerned than their white counterparts with the standards for an "ideal girl" depicted in the media. Having a positive attitude and "not worrying about your looks too much" were important components of a beautiful woman. Attitude eclipsed body parts as a measure of value...Community reinforcement is an important component that sustains this self esteem at high levels.
- African-American girls receive far more positive than negative feedback about how they look from their family and friends... receiving positive feedback for creating their own style around their given attributes. In contrast, white girls received support for altering their looks to fit established beauty ideals.

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Fat is *Still* a Feminist Issue: Susie Orbach in Israel

BY BARBARA GINGOLD

THE WOMAN STEPPING UP to the lectern is Dr. Susie Orbach, world-renowned author of *Fat Is a Feminist Issue* (1978), *The Impossibility of Sex* (1999), and scores of other publications in between. Orbach needs neither makeup nor high heels to assert her authority. She takes the mike to tell some 400 Israeli women about women, body image, and eating problems.

"We have on our hands a major public-health problem," she announces to her audience, largely social workers, psychologists, and other mental health professionals. "An epidemic which infects more people every single day, whose routes are neither mysterious nor genetic nor incomprehensible. An epidemic which we could stop for future girls and women and lessen for girls and women currently, if we had the will to do so. And yet we do not."

The **body itself** is a woman's form of **language**.

Orbach is on her first professional visit to Israel as a guest of the non-profit Counseling Center for Women (CCW), a mental health organization established in 1987 in order to empower women in Israel through psychotherapy. As co-founder and chief executive of The Women's Therapy Centre in London, "Susie" has long inspired CCW's founders—eleven feminist therapists originally from North America and Europe—and its present, much enlarged staff. They have brought her to Israel, to a hotel overlooking the Mediterranean in Bat Yam, to raise the consciousness of the workers in the field, those who deal daily with what is overwhelmingly a women's problem. Most of them are already aware of the alarming statistics. Ninety percent of Israelis with eating disorders are women. The number one cause of depression among young girls is a negative body image. One out of every 20 female teenagers will develop bulimia. One percent of *all* Israeli women will become anorexic. And some of them will die each year from the complications of their eating disorders.

One of many discussions now reverberating throughout the nation on the subject of eating disorders (two other major conferences will take place within a month of this one), this one called by the Counseling Center for Women addresses, in particular, the psychosocial context and impact of

anorexia, bulimia, and related problems. How the personal is the political. What it means to own a woman's body in a male-dominated world. Where the revolution must begin in order to solve women's eating problems: in the psyche, the media, the global marketplace.

Susie Orbach leaves no doubt as to the roots of the problem. "We name what is in reality a social problem as a medical and genetic issue... If we lose sight of the cultural environment which makes these conditions [anorexia, bulimia, compulsive eating] not simply likely but also within the norm for girls and women today, if we unduly pathologize the women who are gripped by these symptoms...we are going to be seriously on the wrong track."

The right track, she says, is to focus on the place of women in contemporary society. While Western women appear to occupy social roles and economic positions which categorically reject subordination, the modern constraints and restrictions that they are expected to place on their own bodies are no less debilitating than the traditional Chinese practice of foot-binding.

The **modern restrictions** we are expected to place on our bodies are **as debilitating** as traditional Chinese foot-binding

A psychologist specializing in the treatment of eating disorders, Orbach can and does provide ample psychological explanations for their existence. Women, for a start, are scared of their own needs. "Talking about food and dieting becomes a way to talk about aspects of women's lives that are deeply troubling to them...Instead of telling one another about our desperation and feelings of impotence, we say 'If I were thin things would be so much better.' Instead of telling one another we feel invisible and unrecognized, we become anorexic and force that recognition on others."

The Cycle of Female Dissatisfaction

I have been careful not to lay blame on those mothers who feel they are "helping" their daughters at a time of vulnerability by teaching them how to diet. But I am concerned about the impact of both their dieting advice and practices that serve to normalize the daughter's dissatisfaction with her body, regardless of whether she actually begins to diet. Without education, this cycle of dissatisfaction with body shape and weight will more than likely be repeated once again as these daughters become mothers. Mothers need to instill pride in their daughters for who they are, not for who they may become [and] shifting the focus of the discussion from the individual to the cultural level might provide girls with a much needed perspective on their own attitudes and behaviors.

—from *Fat Talk: What Girls and their Parents Say About Dieting* by Mimi Nichter

The body itself, Orbach maintains, is a woman's form of language. Her investigations of the unconscious reveal a host of symbolic meanings in body shape and size, in the way people eat or refrain. Despite rank social prejudice against obesity, the female unconscious may equate fat "with power, with presence, with a demand to be seen...A way to keep private vulnerabilities hidden while requesting acceptance for who one is. It is about an attempt to give to self."

Thin, on the other hand, may represent "fear, frailty, disappearing, conformity...the end of conflict, loneliness, or confusion." This, Orbach says, is by no means a positive thing, but rather the negation of an essential element of human existence. "Denying inner conflict, appearing to be alright because one *looks* as one should, actually renders the person too one-dimensional."

Orbach quickly shifts back to the socio-cultural plane, outlining a theory of multi-generational behavioral patterns. For at least two or three generations now, with more or less subtlety, women of the West have been encouraged to curb their appetites. Large appetites bring up the specter of large bodies and large needs; society would rather not confront either. Unwitting females learn, even before they can speak, that their bodies are unsafe; their corporeal beings, complete with smells, desires, flesh, and most of all appetites, are undesirable and unacceptable. "What girls' and women's lips, stomachs, hearts, minds and hungers desire are 'dangerous,'" Orbach notes. "They must be managed, they must be curtailed."

Hapless mothers brought up in this tainted atmosphere, hating their imperfect bodies, insecure and unhappy about the food they consume, can hardly be expected to imbue their daughters with the sense that eating is a wonderful experience. Far more likely, according to Orbach, are the odds that the girls will grow up believing that their own bodies are worthy only of manipulation, correction, and attack from within and without. Far more likely that, anywhere from the age of three onward, they will expend more effort emulating the looks of female pop stars than cultivating mental or physical prowess.

"Ironically and most cruelly," declares Orbach, "it is mothers today, who have suffered the bombardment of a mono-imagery of femininity... who transmit body insecurity to their daughters. [The latter are] then susceptible to the false offers of the fash-

My mother **dieted**, so I did too.

ion diet, fitness and advertising industry, to Hollywood...to give them a body, which of course cannot be done."

Orbach's first awareness of body issues, she confesses, originated in what she carefully calls "my own *mishugas* [craziness]." Without elaborating, she says simply, "My mother dieted, so I did, too. I thought that's how you grow up."

Now 54, Orbach was born and brought up in England. She attended proper English schools, lectures in a proper English accent. On her home turf, though, she is frequently accused of being an American. "My ideas are simply too radical for the British," she laughs. "It's easier to blame them on America."

In truth, her compatriots are not far off. Though her father was a British Jewish politician, Orbach attributes her own proclivity for political activism to her mother, an American Jew who was very involved in the socialist Zionist movement. And many of Susie Orbach's ideas were actually conceived in the fertile ground of American feminism and radical politics of the 70s, when she was studying for advanced degrees in New York. "Everything was up for examination in those days," she recalls. "Housework, careers, parenting. I thought we should look at our bodies, too."

As a political activist, she became interested in the way women were cooperating in the manipulation of their bodies. The usual political and economic analyses failed to account for women's internal oppression. A psychoanalytic approach, she felt, would be more revealing, and she began to delve into women's inner worlds.

The result was *Fat Is a Feminist Issue* ("*FIFI*," she calls it, affectionately) —the benchmark book which made its way around the world more handily than the Hershey bar. Jerusalem therapist Janet Baumgold-Land, one of CCW's founders, still cherishes a photocopy of the book that a friend in California sent her in 1979 when the original sold out.

"The book revolutionized thinking about body issues, hunger, fat, and eating," Baumgold-Land states unequivocally. "As a social critic, Susie made it clear that women had internalized so many contradictory messages about food—from family, from the environment—that we were totally alienated from our bodies. We didn't know the meaning of hunger. We never even knew what we really wanted to eat, if we were actually craving sweets or celery."

Orbach herself saw hand-copied versions of the book being passed from woman to woman in Soviet Russia. Almost 25 years since the first edition appeared in English, she confirms its impact: "I am staggered that *FIFI* is still in print, still relevant today. And that—on the basis of all the pain in it — I've been given a voice."

That voice reaches out, in well-modulated, authoritative clarity, across the packed hall in Bat Yam. "The collapse of civil society and its replacement with the global market and consumerism...has had a curious effect on how we as individuals view ourselves and our place in the world," Orbach says. "Branding—the latest ingenious idea of the advertising industry—has [become] *the* way to belong, to feel recognized and to acknowledge others." Wherever in the world she is, in other words, the woman who identifies with the name brand blasted across her soft drink, her sneakers, the seat of her jeans, has become a member of the brand. The name of her land is irrelevant; so too is her native culture, her natural shape.

Orbach continues. "Girls and women who don't have a secure body image try to belong by acquiring a recognizable body, a thin body, an admired body, in essence a branded body which...secures them a position and an identity." In their efforts to remake themselves in the image of the Western media, to conform to the thin aesthetic being irresistibly promoted all around them, females from Philadelphia to Fiji are still cooperating in the manipulation of their own bodies and their selves, perpetuating their own insecurities.

Orbach the social crusader calls, once again, for a social revolution. "Women today face continuing challenges to express ourselves and to define the expression of who we are. In this we face formidable taboos, some internal, some external; some conscious—such as the diet, fashion, cosmetic, and fitness industries—and some of which we are unaware. To liberate ourselves...in our body, we need to risk the assertion of our own appetites. To recognize that they are great, that they relate to more than food and size, that we have an appetite to take up our space in the world and to celebrate and redefine the strict confines in which we have been seen and so have seen ourselves."

To **liberate** ourselves, we need to **risk asserting** our own appetites.

Lunchtime. Susie throws off her black jacket and, over a plate filled with colorful salads, discusses food with the women of the Counseling Center. A few hours later, as the sun begins to sink into the Mediterranean, she has a revelation to make. "All these years," she reflects, "I thought that I'm my father's daughter. Today was the first time I thought that I'm my mother's daughter." Her face lights up for a moment, and it's not just from the reflection of her bright pink top.

BARBARA GINGOLD, A FOUNDING MOTHER OF LILITH LIVES IN JERUSALEM. SHE CHAIRS THE BOARD OF THE COUNSELING CENTER FOR WOMEN, *ccw@netvision.net.il*.

Before Eve.
Beyond Ms.

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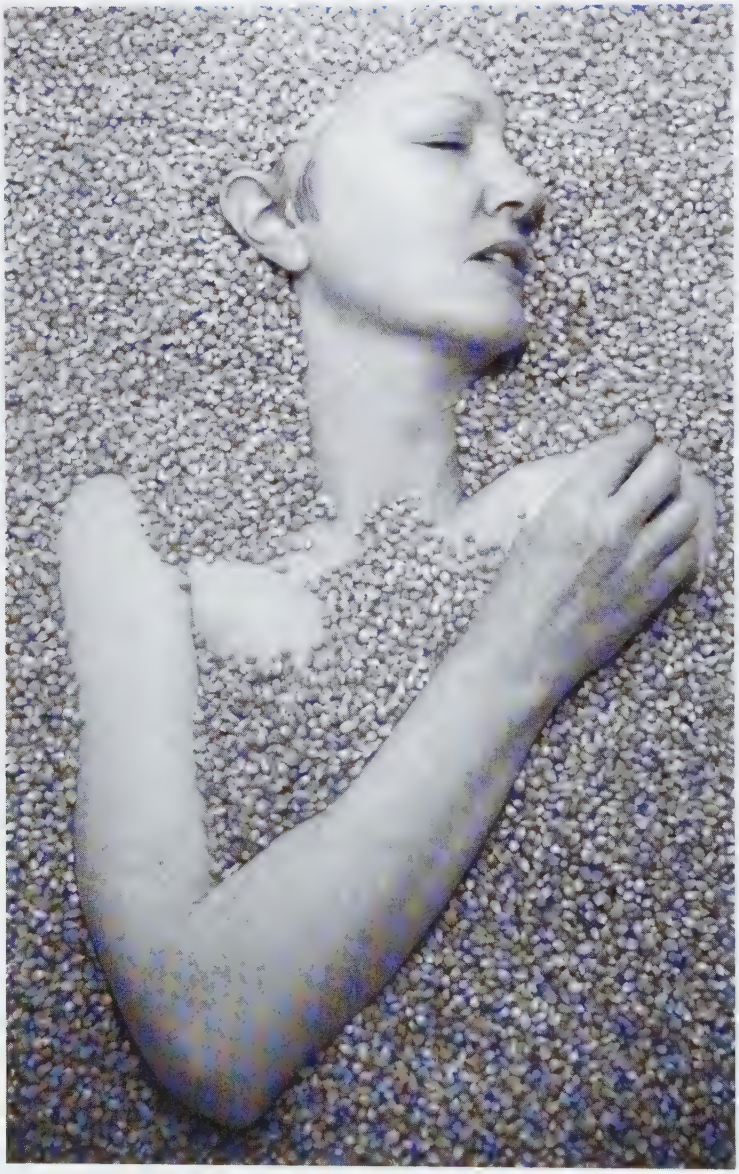
FICTION

Husband unfaithful,
soul parched,
what's a woman to do?

Thirsting

BY SUSIE KAUFMAN



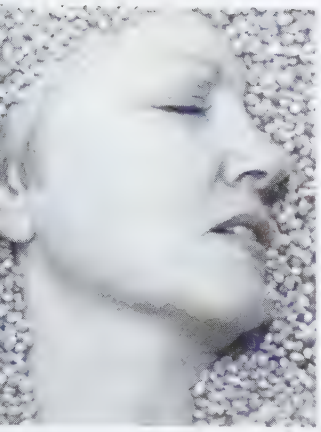
PHOTOGRAPH BY SAMARRA KHAJA

RUTHIE HAS NO IDEA WHAT TO SAY to anyone about anything. She can't think of a single person to confide in.

This kind of thing happened to other women with other husbands. Maybe in the movies. Never to anyone she knows personally. Her husband's partner, Levitz said there was talk in the antique business about Nate and this tall, blonde, Sabina Stein. The thought of people she doesn't even really know wallowing luxuriously in her misfortune makes her feel dizzy. A wave of panic rises up from the pit of her stomach, tensing her jaw, till her teeth hurt. She feels as if she could sweep through the apartment, knocking down every last piece of bric-a-brac, smearing the remains of last night's dinner into the wall-to-wall carpeting. But then the fire fizzles out. She curls up in a ball like a sick cat and waits for new kindling. And it comes. Nate and Sabina on Central Park West eating chestnuts out of the same bag. Nate and Sabina at Parke-Bernet looking over the lots. Morrison telling Weisberg. Weisberg telling Borowsky. Borowsky telling Levitz. And Levitz serving it to her on a Meissen platter, steaming and malodorous.

She decides to get in the tub, running the water as hot as she can stand it. The steam fills the small bathroom till she can no longer see her puffy eyes when she looks in the mirror. Strange how the women in the Bronx when she was a girl, the very Orthodox old country women, would go to the *mikveh* to cleanse themselves, removing their wigs and going back to the Flood, almost bald like babies. How other women, rich, pampered women, would go to spas in Switzerland to be packed in mud, wrapped in scalding towels and finally hosed down. All because something or someone made them feel dirty.

Lying back in the tub and closing her eyes, Ruthie thinks about Nate. Sometimes, even now after more than



Ruthie thinks about Nate. Sometimes, even after twenty years, she finds herself looking at him and wondering who the hell he is.

twenty years, she finds herself looking at him and wondering who the hell he is. The earthy organic odor mixed with shaving cream that rises off his bed linens. The used handkerchiefs rolled into balls he keeps in his pants pockets as if Kleenex had never been invented. His sentimentality. You thought you knew someone after twenty-two years of serving him his orange juice and picking out his ties, but you didn't know anything.

There was a story she heard once about a woman whose husband turned out to be one of those men who exposed themselves in bus stations. They had a nice house in Westchester, a couple of kids. One night when the guy was supposed to be out at a lodge meeting, the doorbell rings and its him in the company of a cop. The cop says to this woman, "Do you know this man?" She says, "of course. It's my husband." "Well, your husband waved his flag at a young girl down at the Greyhound terminal," he says. Imagine.

Ruthie is beginning to feel faint. With effort, she hoists herself out of the tub and bends over to pull out the plug, watching a layer of her flesh gurgle into the drain. Where did it go exactly? Very democratic, modern plumbing. Promiscuous even, how bits of your skin would mingle with bits of skin from people in 12E and 7E and 3E, all the way down to the basement where the handyman conspired with the furnace.

Drying herself off, her first impulse is to go to bed, but even Ruthie feels this gesture is too overplayed, too dime novel at two in the afternoon. She settles on the living room couch, pulling a light cover up to her neck and slipping easily into sleep. But the dreams that come are the ones that always seem to appear during afternoon naps, feistier and more troubling than normal nighttime dreams. She's sitting *shivah*, but no one seems to know who's dead. Great numbers of people are coming and going, paying their respects and bearing cake. Ruthie has never seen so much cake in her life. Schnecken and mandelbrot, nut cake and chocolate cake. Some of it arrives in white cardboard bakery boxes tied with string. Some of it comes laid out on pressed glass cake plates, slightly less symmetrical than the store bought. Out of politeness, she samples each one, eating and eating, all the while wondering why she's sitting shivah and who's dead. Then, a woman she doesn't recognize comes in. This woman has no cake. She's very tall, very straight and very blonde. In the dream, the woman has a Jewish name, Selma Halpern, but she doesn't look like any Jewish person you ever saw. Strictly Yankee, with a steely elegance. While this Halpern introduces herself and expresses her condolences, Ruthie happens to glance over at the other side of the room where she sees that her little David, about seven years old and all done up in his going-to-funerals- and-bar-mitzvahs sports jacket, has managed to plaster the entire front of his shirt and tie with chocolate icing.

When she wakes up, Ruthie feels like the dream, the icing, has schmutzed up the inside of her head where you can't wash. The only way to get in there with the vacuum, with that little attachment they give you for getting into cobwebby corners, would be to tell somebody else about it, but she doesn't have anyone. No sister. Her mother in the nursing home on Long Island, hobbling along in the misperception that Rumania in the eighties of the last century has more reality than yesterday's lunch. Her friends were good for canasta and committees, but personal crises outside the normal range from weight gain to losing your domestic help? Not likely. The only thing she can think of, and this was a very unusual thought, is prayer.

On the face of it, the idea has possibilties. To begin with God would presumably not laugh at you behind your back, or talk about you to His friends. Ruthie imagines a bunch of old men with chicken legs and bloated bellies gossiping in the *shvitz*. He was supposed to be a good listener. The problem is how to find Him, how to get in touch. Ruthie has always felt a little queasy around God, as if she has never been properly introduced. He was like an uncle who lived in another city, who everyone made a big fuss over when he came for *yontiff* but who still seemed like a stranger. To begin with, He always drank schnapps and smoked cigars with the men while the women washed the dishes. Ruthie remembered the interminable hours as a little girl sitting behind the *mehitza* in shul where you couldn't see anything or hear anything except the women whispering. It was like the colored in the back of the bus down South.

After a while, she gave up on Him. If He didn't have the common courtesy to come back and say hello, she could do very nicely without Him. Nate certainly agreed with her on that point. After they were married and had their boys, Ruthie started cooking beef stroganoff, pushing her mother deeper and deeper into the recesses of the apartment until the old lady was left

The whole story was about women. This Sarah. This Hagar. And on the *bimah* only men, touching the Torah, praying over the cracking parchment.

lighting shabbos candles by herself in her bedroom overlooking the trash cans in the alley. Ruthie sent her mother back to the back of the bus.

Still, every year before she went to the Home, the old lady would traipse uptown to the Orthodox shul for *yontiff*, sitting alone among women she didn't really know. And this was the really strange part. Ruthie, not in God's inner circle by a long shot, barely even recognizing Him from one holiday visit to the next, always went to High Holiday services as well. Not to the Orthodox with her mother. No. She went, also alone, to another more modern synagogue where the husbands and wives sat together in good suits and furs and she sat with the widows in the back.

This year on Rosh Hashanah, she stands by herself, clutching her secret fear as if she might lose it in the noisy and exuberant crowd outside the temple. There is much hugging among the women and backslapping among the men. Linkages of blood and marriage, neighborhood, school and business deal weave them into a tangled skein that will never unravel. Or so they

God would presumably not laugh at you behind your back, or talk about you to His friends. He was supposed to be a good listener. The problem is how to find Him, how to get in touch.

think. And yet, there are among them isolated oddities. A shell-shocked veteran of the Korean War. A woman with one wonderful story about her service with the Red Cross in North Africa. And Ruthie. In this vast throng, the Red Cross woman has somehow already found her and launched into a lengthy monologue about the exigencies and romance of desert life. Before she even gets inside the sanctuary, Ruthie's *yontiff* resolve to see the good in other people has suffered a setback. She slips into the ladies' room and waits for the woman to be seated before settling herself on the other side of the aisle and removing the *mahzor* from the rack in front of her. For the first time in memory, she feels a hunger for the prayers. Not for God, not for all these strangers camped around her, but for the cadence of the language, the meaningless sound itself.

The old rabbi, Schlossman, a white haired patriarch with a judgmental, prophet-of-doom style, had died of a massive coronary on Purim during the reading of the *megillah*. There was so much tumult from the noisemakers and general carousing that no one heard him cry out. The congregation was in shock. Committees of wise men and major donors were formed to consider the situation. At first, the tone of the meetings was lugubrious as befit the tragic circumstances. But after a while, people began to admit that Schlossman had been something of a heavy. Who needed a rabbi who was always pointing a finger? It was decided that the new rabbi should be cut from a softer cloth. More compliant. He should be learned, but not too learned. After all, this was Broadway, not Bratslav.

The man they finally chose, Stuart Zelnick, a small, unprepossessing individual of about thirty-five, now stands before them and leads them in the morning blessings.

Baruch atah adonoy elohenu melekh ha'olam
ha'notayn l'yaayf koach.
We offer praise to You, O Lord our God,
King of the Universe,
For giving strength to those who are weary.

And a great weariness settles over Ruth Ginzburg. Summer slipcovers yet to be cleaned. Dinners to cook stretching into eternity. Shop, cook, wash dishes, empty trash and begin again. Shop, cook, wash, trash. Always trying to keep things interesting. Avoiding tedium was exhausting. Maybe that's what happened to Nathan. He fell into the deep well of tedium.

Zelnick continues through the introductory part of the service. He has a pleasant voice that meanders around in the High Holiday *nusach*, the melody, like a boy on a familiar path through the forest. He knows its ups and downs, its modulations and repetitions. Even though it's very early, a drone bass of snoring and a counterpoint of coughing accompany the chant. A woman in green silk sitting two rows in front of Ruthie struggles to support a very old man who keeps giggling lewdly and slumping onto her shoulder.

Yis-gadal v'yis-kadash sh'mey raba

Anticipating the mourner's kaddish, Ruthie is swept back thirty years to the time of her father's death, a scene she revisits only in synagogue and even then with great difficulty. Her father and her uncle Sam supplied merchandise to the peddlers who traveled the miserable back roads down South before they were replaced by the Sears Roebuck catalog. Because of Ruthie's father, the women of Biloxi did not go without ribbon, nor did they suffer for want of a thimble. But all this commerce collapsed in the panic of '07, also the year of Ruth Salkin Ginzburg's birth. From then on, David Salkin was wretched, stopping short of beating his wife and children, but still managing to terrify them. Their life with him an elaborate, inescapable web of rules, threats and punishments. Ruthie tries to remember one gentle moment, one act of unnecessary generosity she could associate with her father, but cannot retrieve a single loving memory. Not a doll. Not a hug. Not a smile. All she can remember, this year as always, is the fear.

Zelnick, the little *pisher*, moves on to Psalm 34. So far, so good. There's a certain appealing frailty in the baby rabbi with his poor eyesight and translucent skin. He doesn't pounce on you with robust righteousness like Schlossman. If anything, he seems withdrawn, in retreat from judgment.

The Lord is near to the broken-hearted.
He helps those who are crushed in spirit.

Crushed. Like walnuts in a grinder, boiled potatoes mashed. Like dough stretched and tortured by the rolling pin. Shop, cook, wash, trash. That's one side of it, the repetition, Ruthie is thinking, instead of reading the prayerbook. But the other side, the crushed, mashed, tortured side is that nothing stays the same. You have to crack eggs to make an omelet. The congregation rises for the *barchu*, Ruthie beginning to warm to the new rabbi. In fact, she's feeling altogether quite warm. She has an odd sensation during *ahavah rabah* that a gentle shower is raining down on her, that maybe there's someone she can lean on like the old man is leaning on his daughter in the green silk dress.

Ahavah rabah ahavtanu adonoy elohaynu
Hemlah gedolah v'tayrah
With abounding love have You loved us, Lord our God;
great and overflowing tenderness have You shown us.

During the long *amidah*, five hundred people standing in place, rocking, mumbling, turning pages, sneezing, praying, she tries to remain in this warm cocoon, but it's difficult. The *amidah* is not for the faint of heart. But the best part is coming soon. It won't be long before they take the Torah out of the ark.

Hyman Broverman, the president of the congregation and a player in misses' sportswear with a showroom on Seventh Avenue, is called to the bimah. The anemic Zelnick and the sharpie Broverman, well-known for having God on his side at the track and the craps table, stand before the open ark. Three magnificent scrolls, covered in embroidered satin, their silver finials gleaming, line up expectantly in the alcove. The rabbi removes the largest one dressed in white and hands it to Broverman who carries the Torah down the steps off the *bimah* and around the sanctuary, up and down the aisles, for the congregants to touch. Watch where you're going, Broverman. Don't drop the Torah. Don't let the flag touch the ground. There is a tremendous, vaguely idolatrous, fervor in the crowd as hundreds of people scramble over one another to get to the holy book. People kissing their prayerbooks, then grazing the end of the book along the scroll as it passes by, like pilgrims touching a reliquary. Finally, Broverman completes his rounds and brings the scroll back up to the rabbi who unrolls the parchment and prepares to read.

First aliyah: Joel Greenbaum, an orthodontist, purveyor of pain and indebtedness, recites the blessing.

God fulfills His promise and sees to it that Sarah bears a child to Abraham in his old age. They name the child Isaac and circumcise him on the eighth day.

Second aliyah: Norman Levitan, a youngish widower and alleged ladies' man, is called up.

Abraham is one hundred years old when Isaac is born. Sarah laughs at the thought of the two of them becoming parents at such an advanced age. Abraham stages a great feast on the day that Isaac is weaned.

Third aliyah: Jack Finkel stumbles over the Hebrew. Finkel, an attorney with Polaroid, is despised but also loved for being the schmuck that didn't have the balls to buy company stock before it went through the roof.

Sarah tells Abraham to exile the slave-woman Hagar and the son of Abraham and Hagar, Ishmael, so that the boy doesn't share in Isaac's inheritance. God tells Abraham to do so because it is through Isaac that Abraham's line will be continued.

Ruthie looks around the great marble sanctuary and sees hundreds of women in their seats. Women who have borne children and women who have not been so fortunate. Women whose husbands have died on them, leaving them alone, without enough to live on and without being hot commodities like the widower, Levitan. The whole story was about women. This Sarah, barren well into old age, finally giving birth to a son, clawing and scraping, scheming to preserve his place in the family. This Hagar, also the mother of a son, willfully cast out of her home by the boy's father and his God. And on the *bimah*, only men, touching the Torah, praying over the cracking parchment.

Fourth aliyah: The woman in green silk nudges the old man, Martin Stransky, and helps him to his feet. Zelnick comes down and leads Stransky up to the Torah for what they both know is the last time.

Abraham gives Hagar some bread and a skin of water, placing them over her shoulder, together with her child, and sends her away. She wanders in the wilderness of Beer-Sheba until the water runs out. Then she leaves the baby under a bush and sits down at a distance so she doesn't have to watch the child die.

Now, the glare of the desert sun is beating down on Ruthie's head. Turning to look in all directions, she sees nothing but moonscape. There is nothing that will sustain her. No food. No water. No friend. She trudges forward in no particular direction, each step a drain on her meager resources, sand gathering in the corners of her eyes. A scavenger's banquet. Ruth Ginzburg has been cast out by her husband. She has fallen onto the floor between the rows of seats during the morning service on Rosh Hashanah at Congregation Beth Shalom, the House of Peace.

SUSIE KAUFMAN OF GREAT BARRINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, HAS CONDUCTED GROUPS IN SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN WHICH PARTICIPANTS ARE INVITED TO CONSIDER THEIR OWN LIFE EXPERIENCE AS THE SOURCE OF THEIR SPIRITUALITY. SHE HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE MAGAZINE *AMERICA*.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Samarra Khaja has a degree in printmaking and drawing with a concentration on photography, which has become her favorite medium. Without using any computer or darkroom manipulation, she specializes in creating other-worldly situations, which she then translates with her camera into richly layered images.

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with a foreword by
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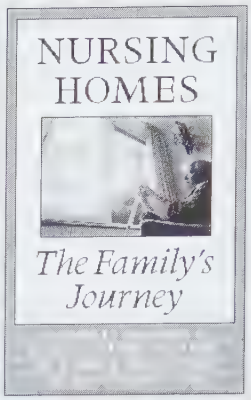

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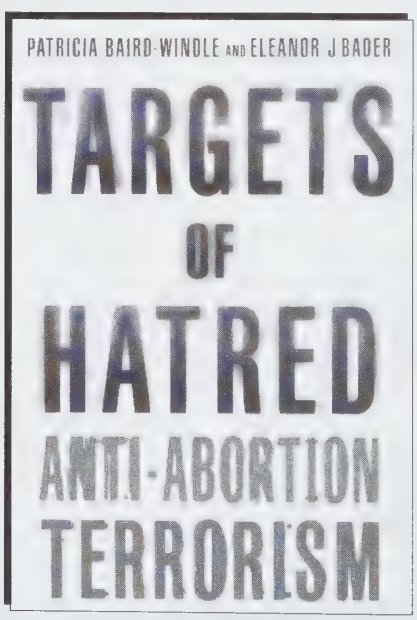

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Neurotica by Sue Margolis, Bantam, $6.95

JEWS ARE PURPORTED TO BE the best-educated group in this country, as well as the most sexually liberal. One consequence of this: a lot of sex books. "Witness the people of the book, in bed," says Melvin Jules Bukiet in the introduction to his wonderful anthology *Neurotica: Jewish Writers on Sex*. How could one go wrong with 26 fictional excerpts by Cynthia Ozick, Erica Jong, Francine Prose, Woody Allen, Isaac Bashevis Singer and a one-act play by the ever-randy Saul Bellow? Personal favorites include the beginning of Jong's infamous *Fear of Flying*: "There were 177 psychoanalysts on the Pan Am flight to Vienna and I'd been treated by at least six of them. And married a seventh," and the late Harold Brodkey's immortal line from his short story "Innocence," about the sexual conquest of a co-ed named Orra: "To see her in sunlight was to see Marxism die." Though Bukiet succeeds in his quest "to hit 100 on both the Jew-o-meter and the sex-o-meter," how could he choose a scene from Philip Roth's *Counterlife* instead of *Portnoy's Complaint*? We want the liver!

When it comes to the sex-o-meter, Amy Sohn's *Run, Catch, Kiss* delivers. Her clever, chaotic autobiographical first novel tells the story of Ariel Steiner, a nice Jewish girl from Brooklyn who just happens to be a sex columnist at New York's hottest downtown weekly. Trouble begins when Ariel falls for a male writer named Adam and decides to lie about her romantic escapades in print to make him jealous. Sohn, who wrote the "Female Trouble" column for New York Press, offers little psychological insight but there's enough weird fornication and self-deprecating humor to make up for it.

Not that being liberated — even in our own time — is always so easy. Leora Tanenbaum's *Slut! Growing Up Female With a Bad Reputation*, chronicles the author's difficult struggle with being sexually branded. In ninth grade, she fooled around with a guy on whom a friend of hers had a crush. In retaliation this "friend" spread the word that Tanenbaum was a slut, and she was subsequently snubbed at school. Like Sohn, she went to the Jewish confessional: revealing her carnal chaos in print, she penned a piece for Seventeen—which led to a book contract. Tanenbaum combines her personal account with interviews of young women and a cultural overview, concluding that the double standard still exists. If you don't believe it, she has two words for you: Monica Lewinsky.

There are no cigars or stained blue dresses in *The Oy of Sex: Jewish Women Write Erotica*, but the 20 fictional selections here throw in everything else: Jewish women who lust for Catholic boys, Jewish women who lust for Jewish women, Jewish women who lust for their own husbands, S&M on Shabbos. Picture a Penthouse-style letter written by a Yiddish grandma: "I melted in bed, *takeh*, like a puddle of *schmaltz*." The most intriguing are pages from Marge Piercy's futurist novel *He, She and It* about a woman seduced by a cyborg, and a sharp section from *Any Woman's Blues* by Erica Jong, (doesn't she ever get tired?) explaining why nice Jewish guys get laid less than WASPs, heiress-hunters, gigolos and grifters.

If Catholic boys or Jewish grandmas don't do it for you, how about chocolate? Enid Futterman's *Bittersweet Journey: A Modestly Erotic Novel of Love, Longing and Chocolate*, tells a strange, sad story about a Brooklyn girl who spends her life longing for her father's love. Traveling around the world she finds lovers less satisfying than truffles, cake, petit fours and fudge. She includes luscious pictures, stories, recipes and — brava — not one mention of a diet!

Sue Margolis's funny British heroine Anna Shapiro, on the other hand, is a man-eater. Margolis's frenetic comic novel *Neurotica*—not to be confused with the anthology mentioned earlier—begins with Anna's hypochondriac editor husband, Dan Bloomfield, hiding in the bathroom, examining his testicles. Following the advice of the book The Clitoris-Centered Woman, Anna attempts to find her own sexual nirvana. Of course this ruins her sanity and marriage. Anna could be Isadora Wing's British cousin, having long ago "rejected the whole neo-bourgeois, crypto-fascist Jewburbia thing by smoking dope in the ladies' room synagogue during the Yom Kipper service and turning up to her bubba's shabbos dinners wearing no knickers." Dan fell instantly, utterly and overwhelmingly in love. Who wouldn't?

— SUSAN SHAPIRO

STORY TELLING AS SURVIVAL STRATEGY

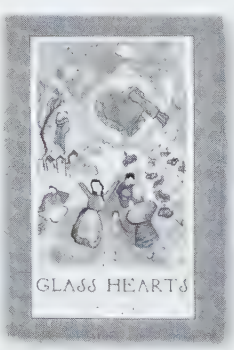
The Reason for Wings by Joyce Reisner Kornblatt
Syracuse University Press, $24.95

Glass Hearts by Terri Paul, Academy Chicago Publishers, $24.95

RACHAEL SILVER, THE LYRICAL AND BRAVE narrator of *The Reason For Wings* is a Holocaust survivor who escapes one fascist regime only to arrive at the "next round of pain for which it seems we are all rehearsing," in Argentina during the 1970s. Serene Spirer, the spirited adolescent of *Glass Hearts*, escapes Hungary before Hitler's reign. Her family's displacement during World War I foreshadows the forced migration of European Jewry. Serene gains a father in America, while Rachael loses a daughter, son-in-law, and grandchild in Argentina's "Dirty War" of the 1970s. Both narrators are concerned with the preservation of their family history; both also view the act of storytelling as an act of survival.

Rachael's grandfather disappears in the Danube Delta at the beginning of *The Reason For Wings*, magically transmogrifying into a pelican. Other supernatural events abound, as if the horrors of both world wars were too grim to narrate realistically. Rachael's mother, for example, survives a brutal bombing by miraculously staying underwater.

The most powerful section in *The Reason For Wings* is Rachael's depiction of Argentina's "Dirty War." Her daughter is murdered not only because of her opposition to the government but also because she is pregnant. Whether or not the baby survives is left intentionally vague by the author, who hints that Rachael's missing granddaughter has probably been adopted by a military family (not supernatural at all; this actually was believed to have happened frequently under Argentina's oppressive regime). Rachael's persistent search and the expected recovery of her granddaughter suggest that the victims of history can ultimately conquer their oppressors.



The supernatural also plays an important part in *Glass Hearts*. Serene frequently speaks to ghosts, is telepathically connected with her father in America, and creates spells with the magical glass heart of the title. At times these elements distract from the narrative. Serene's mother's struggle to raise a family as a single parent, and the loss of her Hungarian home because of the first World War, are far more compelling than the world of spirits conjured by the author.

Serene finds freedom in America, while Rachael ends her story hoping for a world in "which nobody seemed to be suffering and death was a rumor best dismissed." Both these moving novels celebrate the dignity and courage of ordinary women facing extraordinary times.

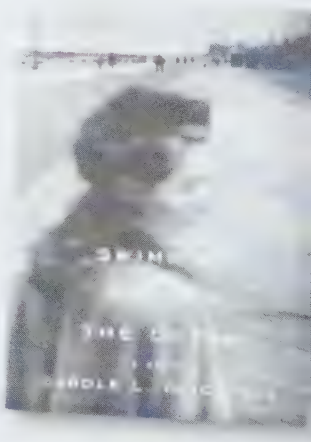
— PAMELA BRANT

Swimming Toward the Ocean by Carole L. Glickfeld, Alfred A. Knopf, $24

AN EFFECTIVE NOVEL LURKS INSIDE *Swimming Toward the Ocean*, Carole L. Glickfeld's second book (Her first, *Useful Gifts*, 1989, was a collection of short stories.) The focus here is Chenia Arnow, a spirited though uneducated Eastern European immigrant.

The novel's narrator is Devorah, the youngest of Chenia's children, who recalls memories and creates new ones in an attempt to piece together her childhood. That she does so from both her own and her mother's (imagined) point of view is a difficult trick that Glickfeld, thanks to her lucid writing, pulls off nicely.

The story begins when Devorah is in the womb. It is then that 45-year-old Chenia, trapped in a loveless, 1950s marriage to an unfaithful husband, jumps rope in hopes of miscarrying. Chenia's despair leads her to an aborted suicide attempt and then an affair of her own which awakens latent passions. The story moves from Brooklyn's Coney Island—lovingly evoked—to Manhattan, where the affair ends in disaster and another suicide attempt. This one lands Chenia in an institution, and young Devorah at her cousins' in New Jersey.



Devorah hungers for her mother's love and attention, even more so when Chenia recuperates and marries a good, dull man who squashes her wit and fire. An unsatisfying ending, which hurriedly tracks 25 years, doesn't adequately explain why Devorah so badly needs to understand her mother's life, and the ways in which it has affected her own. Yet Glickfeld's deft prose and distinctive characters make *Swimming Toward the Ocean* an engaging and sometimes moving story.

— ROBERTA BERNSTEIN

SHORT, BUT NOT SWEET: THREE STORY COLLECTIONS

Love and Modern Medicine by Perri Klass, Mariner Books, $13
Lunar Eclipse by Alona Kimchi, Toby Press, $15.95
House Fires by Nancy Reisman, Iowa, $18.95

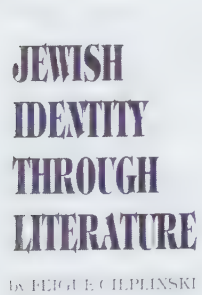
THREE NEW SHORT STORY COLLECTIONS by Jewish women offer very different ways to make sense of sitting here on the border of two centuries, with all that past behind us, and with such an uncertain future ahead.

The cleanly written, finely crafted stories by Perri Klass in *Love and Modern Medicine* are informed by Klass's experience as a physician, and many of the characters are wending their way through the maze of what medical intervention can and cannot do. These are intimate stories, taking place in the close world of domesticity.

Occasionally Klass moves into poetic language: "Sudden means abrupt and out of the blue. Sudden means was and then wasn't," but for the most part she stays within the confines of language as a vehicle for telling her stories directly. They are graceful and perfectly formed as a newborn baby, whether they describe a woman whose young child is diagnosed with leukemia or a single woman giving birth with her best friend by her side.

Alona Kimchi's *Lunar Eclipse* is a sharply divergent view of life on the millennial border. A galloping ride through the underbelly of life at the end of the 20th century, these stories are filled with hard-hitting prose and characters who are fascinating in their various degrees of angst. Unlike Klass's more timeless evocations, these stories feel as if they could have been written in no other era than the present. The characters get high on Ecstasy, speak freely of their sexual needs and escapades, and wander through the post-modern world in a desperate search for what it could mean to be a Jewish woman after the establishment of Israel, after the fall of the Berlin wall, after the invention of electroshock therapy. "Why Berlin of all places?" the narrator of "Berlin Diaries" asks upon finding herself in a Berlin hotel in the midst of a mental breakdown. "Bloodthirsty Palestinian students disguised as room-service waiters carry compact explosive charges in their rectums which were stretched by Israeli Mossad interrogators. Mum, mum, we don't want to hear about what the Nazis did to us in the Holocaust." These are rough-edged stories for rough times; there is little here that will soothe.

JEWISH IDENTITY THROUGH LITERATURE
by Feigue Cieplinski



Jewish Identity Through Literature represents an overview of how identity formed at different periods of the history of the Jews. Both the inner factors and the outside pressures can be seen in each of the literature works presented.

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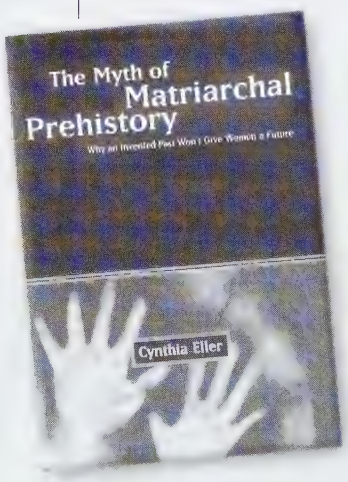
In contrast, Nancy Reisman's collection, *House Fires*, moves more slowly, from 1948 Buffalo to present-day San Francisco; perhaps the author's sweeping understanding of history allows her characters some relief from the pain of their era. This is the place to look if you're after prose that soars off the page: Reisman is clearly a writer in love with language, and she dives in and out of sentences with an acrobat's or a poet's grace. Still, this does not prevent Reisman from staring down sharp disappointments and grief. In one story, the narrator's sister has died in a fire: "Her last minutes seemed a vast unlit space I could neither penetrate nor ignore." In the collection's final story, the narrator chronicles her mother's descent into illness, but still ends the story, and the collection as a whole, with a sense of redemption, not in the absence of loss but in the face of it, which catches you "on the brink of your deepest despair, and carries you back, safe, into the good life."

– SARAH VAN ARSDALE

GREAT GODDESSES? DISMANTLING THE HISTORICAL HYPE

The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory by Cynthia Eller, Beacon Press, Boston, $26.

EVER SINCE THE SECOND WAVE of the women's movement began in the '60s, many feminist scholars have embraced a theory of a prehistoric Middle Eastern and European past when women ruled the world. Benignly, of course. This theory, which is based mostly on archaeological evidence, originated in the 19th Century, and was later popularized by such classical scholars as Jacquetta Hawkes and the writer Robert Graves. Supposedly, the theory goes, a peace-loving matriarchy existed in prehistoric times, based on agriculture and not war. People worshipped the Great Goddess, not gods, who supposedly had yet no place in religion. But then a cataclysm occurred, in the form of invading nomads who swept down from the north. They displaced the all-nourishing Goddess with their patriarchal and oppressive pantheon, from which we women today are still trying to shake free.



But in *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory*, Cynthia Eller, after examining the evidence for this theory, shows that it is at best highly tentative. She argues, for example, that the Minoan snake-goddess figurines that Sir Arthur Evans excavated in Crete or Paleolithic cave-art in the south of France that include designs resembling vulvas do not necessarily add up to a vanished golden age in which power depended not on brute force but maternal instinct. In fact, Eller says, the vulva-like designs could just as well be interpreted as expressions of misogyny, much like the vulgar graffiti with which teenage boys deface public walls.

Eller, an associate professor of religion at Montclair State University in New Jersey, is a feminist herself. But she criticizes her feminist colleagues for incorporating this theory so uncritically into the field of gender studies. In the end, she argues, their bad scholarship will hurt their political cause. Eller is not the first feminist scholar to question the existence of a long-ago world ruled by women. As early as 1975, classicist Sarah Pomeroy, for example, expressed the same reservations in her book *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*.

Although Eller's prose sometimes suffers from repetitions and academic jargon, we can forgive her because of her thorough research, and because of her willingness—as a feminist—to challenge popular feminist theories.

— ALICE SPARBERG ALEXIOU

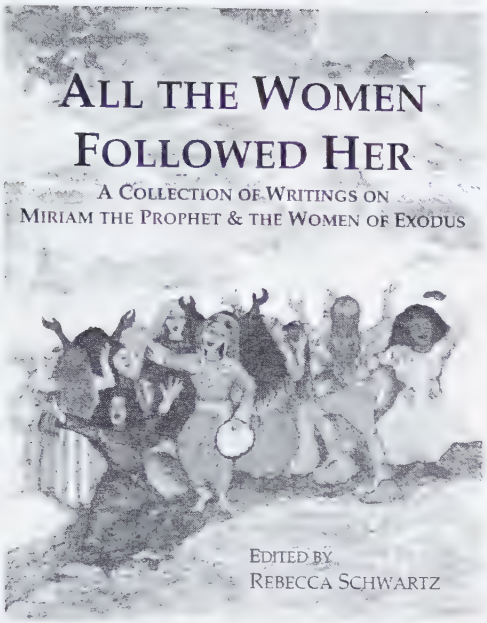
A COMPLICATED VIEW OF ISRAEL

Scapegoat: The Jews, Israel, and Women's Liberation by Andrea Dworkin, Free Press, $28

WITH 337 PAGES OF DENSE TEXT, 1,454 footnotes and 47 pages of bibliography, *Scapegoat* must not have been easy to write. It's not easy to read either. Like rich cake tasty in small bites, Dworkin's erudite polemic is best read in small segments. *Scapegoat*'s ambitious scope is clear from its subtitle: *The Jews, Israel, and Women's Liberation*. The work explores Jewish history, culture and customs, in particular graphic and brutal reports of Nazi sex atrocities, and ranges beyond over the entire terrain of modern civilization.

The voluminous writing tends to obfuscate Dworkin's relatively simple thesis: Jewish men, once scapegoats par excellence, have been transformed into Israeli men with a heavy boot upon internal and external scapegoats: "For Jews, including Israeli Jews, Palestinian Arabs are the scapegoat: the source of all danger and terror, the polluting presence; the inferior and abject." She asserts that "The masculinity of Israeli soldiers frankly goes off the charts: normalizing Jewishness has meant normalizing violence." The use of torture in Israel (outlawed by the Israeli Supreme Court since the book's writing) "eliminates ethical Judaism from the boundaries of the Israeli state."

Dworkin's book is particularly relevant in light of the recent violent eruptions in Israel. They give an urgency to her historical analysis of Israel's spotty compromised history with its Arab population and neighbors. Her detailed history of Zionism in the 20th century includes violent episodes against Arabs which traditional Jewish sources often leave out. She traces the expropriation and murder of Palestinians in 1948, and the oppression of Palestinians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after the Six Day War culminating in the Intifada, whose literal meaning in Arabic is "the shivering that grips a person suffering from a fever or the persistent shaking off of a dog infested with fleas." "The impact of Israeli rule in the occupied territories…has been to create a nihilistic hatred of the occupiers," she writes. "Ehud Barak … acknowledges that if he had been born a Palestinian, he himself would have been part of 'a terror organization at some point.'"

Israel's own women are the internal scapegoat, as women are in other societies around the world. Legal, social and military Israeli norms keep women securely second class. Discriminatory laws of marriage and divorce keep Israeli women in their place, as do widespread prostitution and trafficking in sex. Even when women are grudgingly accepted in the world's liberation struggles, gaining "a temporary pass from complete servility," once liberation has been achieved, women are unceremoniously "recolonized."

Quotations shower down in an eclectic jumble: Martin Heidegger, President Clinton, Emile Zola, Frederick Douglas, Leon Uris, Anna Akmatova, Theodor Herzl, Nawal El Saadawi, Amos Oz, Benjamin Disraeli, Isaac Babel, Hannah Arendt. The reader, struggling to keep the thread, emerges with her head spinning. Dworkin hops, skips and jumps from indignity to indignity: the *sati* custom in India which condemns a woman to live beside her potential murderer, the doomed Saudi Arabian women's rebellion in pursuit of the simple right to drive a car. In one paragraph the author analyzes the woman-hating character of Western art and ends with children surveyed in Michigan saying that it is more worthwhile to be a boy than a girl.

Zionists repudiated Holocaust survivors, Dworkin asserts, and particularly the experiences of women in the Holocaust. Rape, forced prostitution and sexual torture are hardly memorialized in Holocaust literature or in public memorials. The menial tasks assigned to women in the Israeli army, and "every aspect of second-class status for women in Israel degrades and demeans the women who were murdered in the Holocaust and the women who survived it."

Dworkin's writing is so dense one has trouble seeing the forest for the trees, but we are helped by the repetition, like the beating of a background drum, of her message in different words throughout. Arab women are subjugated by the veil, Israeli women by a macho "nearly apartheid state," and women everywhere by the prevalence of rape against them and cooperation in their own oppression.

Scapegoat is a passionate manifesto urging women to turn away from a basic self-destructive loyalty to men towards a loyalty to themselves. Instead of accepting the historical role of eternal scapegoat, she urges women to rise

up and fight against worldwide male domination, which "like gravity, holds everything and every one in place but is not visible to the naked eye," to become "strong girls who grow up to be strong and fierce women."

Scapegoat is an extreme, partisan, provocative, unbalanced and strident book. It is also a brave one.

—HELEN SCHARY MOTRO

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE; JEWISH PLAYERS STRUT AND DANCE UPON IT

God, Man and Devil: Yiddish Plays in Translation
by Nahma Sandrow, Syracuse University Press, $24.95

WELL BEFORE WOODY ALLEN LEFT MIA for Soon Li, Hershele Dubrovner traded in his wife of 22 years, Pesenyu, for his niece and all but adopted daughter, Freydenyu in Jacob Gordin's Faustian tragedy "God, Man and Devil" (1900), one of five works translated by Nahma Sandrow in this new anthology of Yiddish plays. Gordin's work heralded a new trend toward literary dramas in the Yiddish theater and the remaining four were performed by the Yiddish art theaters of America and Eastern Europe as well as by Guild Theater in New York and Max Reinhardt's famous company in Berlin. Also included in this volume are Peretz Hirschbein's pastoral comedy about Jewish love in the countryside "Green Fields" (1916), H. Leivick's workers' drama—and a precursor to Clifford Odets—"Shop" (1926), David Pinski's farce about greed and money "The Treasure" (1906) and Osip Dymov's hilarious absurdist comedy which takes place on a subway entitled "Bronx Express: A Dream in Three Acts with a Prologue and an Epilogue" (1919). Together, the eminently performable scripts include one murder, two suicides, a divorce, five weddings, an engagement, three overnight millionaires and many vivid, tragic and comic characters. Also the roles for women are mighty and varied — a strike organizer, a social climbing ingenue, a struggling widow and a seductive cigarette magnate, to name a few.

A brief introduction to Yiddish theater begins this edition; it includes the names of many other important Yiddish writers whose work has yet to appear in English. (Curious readers should follow this collection with Sandrow's "Vagabond Stars" — an introduction to Yiddish theater around the globe.) Sandrow also edits the scripts and explains her translation choices in the preface to each play. Most helpfully, she includes detailed explanations of Jewish rituals and customs that appear in each work. Like Joseph Landis' translations before her, Sandrow does a great mitzvah for the American theater by rendering into simple, straightforward English five magnificent plays — three of them uniquely American — that otherwise would have been lost to history.

— CARAID O'BRIEN

Converging Movements:
Modern Dance and Jewish Culture at the 92nd Street Y
by Naomi M. Jackson, Wesleyan University Press, $40

THE RISE OF MODERN DANCE IN NEW YORK is a story of institutions as well as of artists and their companies. The 92nd Street Y, (the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association, at 92nd Street and Lexington Avenue, in Manhattan), is one such key institution, and its history has been devotedly researched and ably related by Naomi M. Jackson, an assistant professor of dance at Arizona State University. In large measure, it is the story of administrative decisions made and energetically carried out by one far-seeing individual: William Kolodney, the Y's educational director between 1934 and 1969.

When he sought to serve the dance, Kolodney looked for the best teachers, performers, and advisors he could find, beginning with Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Hanya Holm, Charles Weidman, John Martin, and Louis Horst. During Kolodney's 35-year tenure, every modern dancer of significance in New York either performed or taught at the Y, (which frequently spotted them early in their careers), as did some legendary ballet dancers (among them, Carmelita Maracci and Janet Collins), dance-mimes (Angna Enters), tappers (Paul Draper), and internationally distinguished practitioners of dance traditions from all over the world (Argentinita, Carmen Amaya, Asadata Dafora, Pearl Primus).

Jackson gently tries to renovate the Y's somewhat bourgeois image today by suggesting that the institution's historic hospitality to African-American artists and other artists of color anticipated the diversity of multiculturalism, and that its steady sponsorship of women choreographers and of Jewish themes have left a legacy in postmodern dance. That is, she tries to repackage its achievements using today's buzz words, which are frequently associated with mass marketing and pop culture. It's a noble effort toward relevancy that I don't buy. Under Kolodney, the Y was a colorblind institution, yes; but it exhibited highbrow taste in its offerings, wherever they came from. It couldn't afford to attract, say, Graham at her peak; but it could give audiences Anna Sokolow in her prime and Merce Cunningham and Paul Taylor in their youth. (The Y would go down in dance history simply on the strength of the fact that, in

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1960, it produced the program by the tyro Alvin Ailey that contained the world premiere of "Revelations.")

Kolodney made special efforts throughout his career to promote Jewish themes, choreographers, and dances, notably the dances of Israel. Jewish choreographers and teachers consistently appeared at the Y, including many women, a number of them from the political left. (Sokolow and her dancers, for instance, performed almost yearly during the late '30s; also frequent visitors were the choreographers Lillian Shapero and Marie Marchowsky.)

However, for most of the '30s, Y audience interest in choreographers labeled as either Jewish or extremely leftist was mild. As Jackson reports: "In a 1991 interview the radical Jewish dancer Edith Segal stated that she never performed at the Y because her work was 'too left' for the organization; and when Kolodney tried to organize a Jewish Dance Evening in September 1939, with Miriam Blecher, Fanya Chochem, Belle Didjah, Lasar Galpern, Aleh-Leaf, Pauline Koner, Shapero, and Benjamin Zemach, he had to cancel it because there was "insufficient response," apparently on the part of the Y community.

The turning point—that is, a new, assertive emphasis in Y programming on what Jackson describes as "the increased intersection of Jewish interests with modern dance"—seems to have been 1939–40, and to have been impelled by the dire news about the Jews of Europe. This emphasis on the convergence of Judaism and modern dance at the Y, which continued after World War II, produced at least three landmark dances, all by Jewish women: Sokolow's "Kaddish" (1946), a memorial to the war's victims; Sophie Maslow's "The Village I Knew" (1951), based in part on the stories of Sholom Aleichem and the paintings of Marc Chagall; and Pearl Lang's "The Possessed" (1974) based on the tale of the Dybbuk.

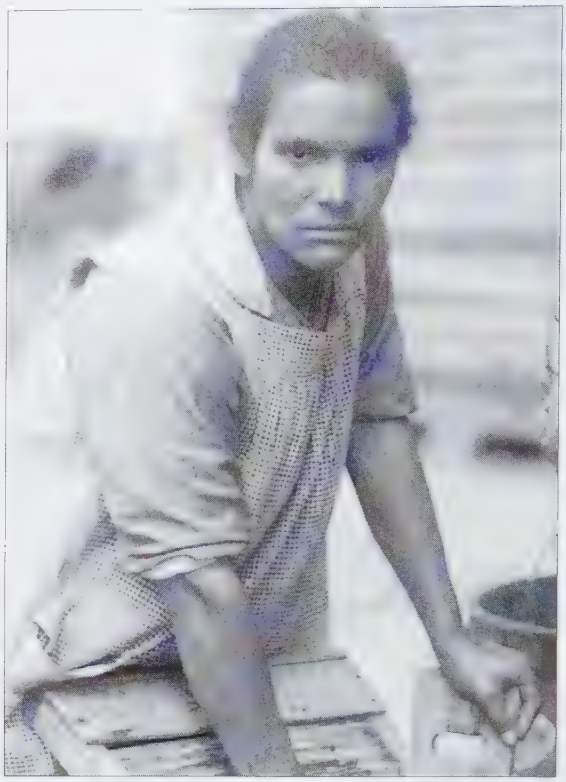
One also wishes that the story of an edifice containing one of the loveliest small theaters in New York would include information about the architect, and that its discussion of the Y's path-breaking dance company for children, the Merry-Go Rounders, would mention that the company launched the career of Jennifer Tipton, now the leading lighting designer for dance worldwide. Its omissions and moments of overreaching aside, this is an enlightening and honorable dance history.

— MINDY ALOFF

Doris Ulmann Taking Photograph with View Format Camera, c. 1933–1934. Gelatin silver print. John Jacob Niles. John Jacob Niles Collection, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries.

BORN IN 1882 into to a prosperous, assimilated German-Jewish family, Doris May Ulmann studied at the Ethical Culture School in Manhattan, where the ideals of its founder, Dr. Felix Adler, made a deep impression upon her: faith in the worth of every human being and the conviction that differences contribute to a democratic society. When as a married woman Ulmann took up photography, it was Adler who guided her toward many of her subjects: Appalachians, Africans and Native Americans. In *The Life and Photography of Doris Ulmann* (Philip Walker Jacobs, The University of Kentucky Press, $40), we see that a substantial portion of her professional life was dedicated to honoring and documenting the lives of people outside the mainstream of a rapidly developing American industrial culture.

—YONA ZELDIS MCDONOUGH



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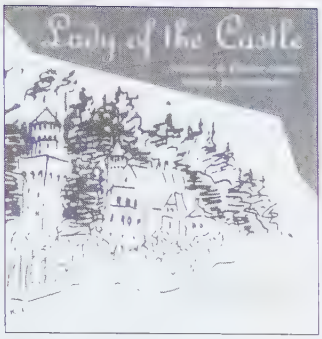

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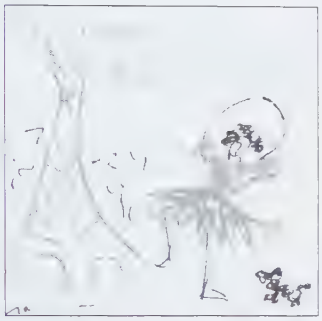

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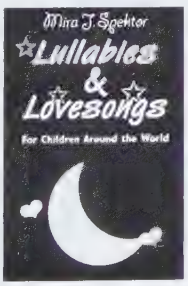

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In ***The Marriage Sabbatical: The Journey That Brings You Home*** (Perseus Publishing, $24.00) Cheryl Jarvis interviews women who have taken "time off"—weeks, months—from their marriages in order to do necessary self-exploration, adventuring, dream-following. Because the stereotypes (to say nothing of the bad jokes, and maybe even the reality) associate Jewish mothers with being overly devoted to their children, LILITH offers up these observations from the book as antidote to the chronic and self-eroding focus on the needs of others that characterize many women's most energetic years.

The only thing we have to offer others—ever—is our own state of being. Many psychologists, Erik Erikson and Abraham Maslow among them, established that self-care leads to a stronger identity, and a stronger identity makes it easier to give. When we are confident in who we are, strong in our talents and filled up within, caring for others becomes easier and more authentic. When we nurture ourselves, caretaking feels like generosity rather than obligation, derives from grace rather than guilt. We can wonder ad infinitum whether we're being self-nurturant or self-indulgent, but it's an energy-wasting debate. Since self-nurturance means "caring for ourselves" and self-indulgence means "giving way to our desires," what difference does it make? Let's just call it self-indulgence and ask a different question: What's wrong with self-indulgence? If a woman spends a good part of her life for ten, twenty, or thirty years caring for others, and taking time out for herself helps her to spend another ten, twenty, or thirty years caring for others, maybe self-indulgence is exactly what more women need in their lives. In good relationships, people take care of each other and themselves, yet during the long, stressful years of raising children, few married mothers spend on themselves—even once—the energy, the time, the money, the care they lavish so freely and consistently upon those they love. Until I researched this book, I'd never known a married mother who had.

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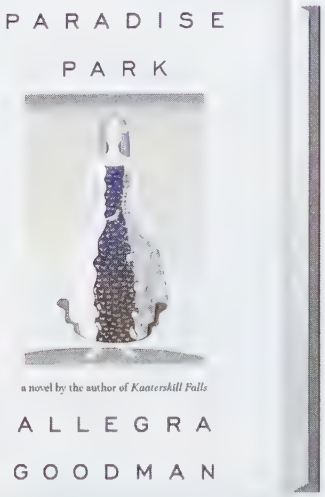

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UPDATE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

Free Fly Fishing Retreats for women recovering from breast cancer. Participants enjoy peace and quiet, nature, companionship, support, and a sport whose movements provide appropriate physical therapy after cancer surgery. *Casting for Recovery, PMB-257, 946 Great Plain Ave., Needham, MA 02492; toll-free: 888-553-3500 or 802-362-4137; cfrprogram@aol.com; www.castingforrecovery.org*

BRCA1 Screening in a Woman with Breast Cancer. Explore the implications of tests for a patient's relatives and their right to know the results. In the March/April 2001 issue of Women's Health Issues. $25 from the *Jacobs Institute of Women's Health, 409 12th St. NW, Washington DC 20024-2188; (202)863-4989; fax (202)488-4229; sfitzer@acog.org*

Diabetes. Approximately 8.1 million or 8.2% of all women in the U.S. have diabetes, however, about a third of them don't know it. With its possible complications—blindness, kidney disease, amputations, heart attack and stroke—diabetes is the sixth leading cause of death by disease in the U.S. A risk test is free from the *American Diabetes Association, 1-800-DIA-BETES (1-800-342-2383); www.diabetes.org/risktest/women.*

TRAVEL

A Haifa Women's Study Tour. Be inspired by grassroots and mainstream women's organizations and women from different backgrounds working together to improve the status of women. Listen to lectures by feminist academics on the history and status of women in Israel; meet with activists who established Israel's first Battered Women's Shelter, Mayoral Women's Commission, National Hotline for Victims of Domestic Violence, and more. Contact the *Haifa Municipality: (972)4-835-6751 or the University of Haifa (972)-4-824-0093.*

Isolated and at-risk Jewish communities from Alabama to Virginia are assisted with historic preservation of buildings and cemeteries, collecting oral histories and genealogy, cultural programming and exhibits, and the services of a teacher and a circuit-riding rabbi for lifecycle events and holiday/shabbat services by the not-for-profit *Goldring Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, P.O, Box 16528, Jackson, MS 39236-0528; (601) 362-6357; fax (601)366-6293; information@msje.org; www.msje.org*

CREATIVE ELDERING

I Remember When: Activity Ideas to Help People Reminisce by Howard Thorsheim and Bruce Roberts, two psychologists, is based on their findings that when people share stories of their meaningful life experiences with others they have a better sense of wellbeing and greater feelings of community. *$18.90 from Elder Books, PO Box 490, Forest Knolls CA 94933; (800)909-2673; fax (415)488-4720; info@ElderBooks.com*

A web site for caregivers offers information and advice on a wide variety of health issues including Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, depression, adult day care, housing, transportation, rehabilitation, respite care, care for the blind and visually impaired, and assistive devices. New York's Jewish Home and Hospital, an academic nursing home and rehabilitation center with adult day and evening healthcare programs serves 4,000 people daily. *www.JewishHome.org.*

Pirkei Imahot: pithy, poignant, some funny and some sad, 50 essays, poems and stories written by synagogue members about their mothers make up a volume of foremother's wisdom. $14.95 plus shipping from *Bryna Cytrynbaum, Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation, 303 Dodge Ave., Evanston, IL 60202; (847)328-7678; bryna@jrc-evanston.org*

HOLOCAUST

A Hidden Child Exhibit is being assembled at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum for the spring of 2003. If you have photographs, passports, false identity cards, dolls, toys, articles of clothing, religious or other objects you managed to preserve and would consider lending or donating to the museum, please fill out an artifact questionnaire available from *Kyra Schuster, Division of Collections, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, DC 20024-2126; fax (202)314-7822; kschuster@ushmm.org; www.ushmm.org*

The Swiss Banks Settlement of Claims by Holocaust Survivors is underway, and final claims must be filed by August or September 2001. 560,000 individuals who submitted an initial questionnaire or requested information will automatically receive it in the mail. Contact: *Holocaust Victim Assets Program (Swiss Banks) International Organization for Migration (IOM) 1752 N St.NW, # 700, Washington DC 20036-2906; (877) 691- 2862; www.swiss-bankclaims.com*

The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors: the Moral and Ethical Implications for Humanity, the Prime Minister's International Conference for dignitaries, scholars and educators at all levels, meets, in English, in Jerusalem, April 8-11, 2002. Send an abstract for a paper to be considered for presentation by August 1, 2001 to *Kathryn Berman and Ephraim Kaye, 3rd International Conference on the Holocaust and Education, International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem, POB 3477, 91034 Jerusalem Israel; (972)2-6443638; fax (972)2-644-3623; conference@yadvashem.org.il; www.yadvashem.org*

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Students working for social justice on college campuses can subscribe to a new email list to keep in touch, share ideas, and coordinate events. The list will be used to plan a conference next year sponsored by Lights in Action for Jewish students about social justice. Join by sending an e-mail to *jews4justice subscribe @yahoogroups.com; or call Kent at LIA 800-JEWS-ACT or lia@lia.org*

Project Amos. Named for the Biblical prophet most closely identified with the theme of social justice, Amos is a new initiative designed to be a catalyst and provide resources for the Jewish community in the arena of social justice. *Project Amos, 443 Park Ave South , 11th fl., New York, NY 10016-7322; (646)424-9010; fax (212)686-1353; www.amospartnership.org*

World Politics, Women, and Building Peace is the theme of the summer 2003 issue of Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society. Academicians, international policy makers and those working in non-governmental organizations may send papers that expand feminist analysis of armed conflict and the creation and maintenance of justice and peace. Submit five copies by October 31, 2001 to: *Signs-WPWBP, 1400H Public Policy Bldg., Box 957122; UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095-7122; http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/Signs/instruct.html.*

Medieval Jewish Women in History, Literature, Law and Art: A Bibliography, created by Cheryl Tallan, is available, along with other interesting bibliograhies, under Publications, Working Paper #7, June 2000 on the web site of the *Hadassah International Research Institute on Jewish Women at Brandeis University, http://www.brandeis.edu/hirijw/*

B-Mitzvah, a web link under development, is dedicated to providing resources allowing students and families to amplify spirituality during the bat/bar mitzvah journey. Send your bat mitzvah speech/dvar Torah in basic e-mail form (pasted in the message, not as an attachment), or in the form of a photo, painting, song (sheet music, lyrics, or wav file), or poem you created for your bat mitzvah. Share unique ritual or other creative elements that would be exciting for others to consider for their bat mitzvah. Send a separate e-mail describing this as well and it may become a regular feature on the site. (E-mail to: MyDvar@aol.com) B-Mitzvah Link is also seeking gender-inclusive and female centered Jewish graphics which b-mitzvah families can use in their invitations and service booklets. Please send them as gif or jpeg attachments. Did a bat mitzvah in your family break new ground? Send your recollections for the HERSTORY section of the site. The B-Mitzvah Link is a program of the virtual Jewish community, Reclaiming Judaism as a Spiritual Practice, founded by Rabbi Goldie Milgram. Looking for creative ways to create a dvar Torah? *Visit her current web site www.rebgoldie.com*

Sexual Orientation Issues in Congregations and Community Initiative targets Reform rabbinical, cantorial, educational and communal service students and alumni—hoping to raise their awareness of the needs of lesbian and gay Jews and their loved ones and provide practical knowledge of how to combat and transform stereotypes and promote inclusion. A virtual resource center is also planned. *SOICC, HUC-JIR, 3077 University Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90007-3796; (213)749-3424; fax (213)747-6128; www.huc.edu*

Canadian women's seders. Did you participate in one? If you are willing to fill out a questionnaire on your experience for a doctoral research project, a study on women's seders, please contact *Sonia Zylberberg, Religion Department, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd West, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3G 1M8. sonia@vax2.concordia.ca*

Ruth Dunkell

"Reach for the Moon" is an exhibit of paintings by Ruth Dunkell, who with her husband, Dr. Samuel Dunkell, founded the National Tay Sachs Association, which over 40 years, achieved the virtual elimination of the fatal genetic disease whose victims were mainly Ashkenazic Jewish children. This exhibit shows the artist's spiritual growth, the link between art and science, and tells the story that culminated in a medical breakthrough. Through July 28 at *Yehiva University Museum, 15 W. 16th St., New York, NY 10011; (212)294)8330; www.yu.edu/museum*

Old and de-activated cellular phones may be donated to victims of domestic violence and other people in need. Contact your local domestic violence network, police department, or phone company to see who is collecting and distributing them or start a project at your synagogue or community organization. Details at *www.donateaphone.com*

Workplace Supports for Interfaith Families. Handling the Holidays: Whose, Which and Where; Getting Married: Guidance for Interfaith Couples; and Raising Children in an Interfaith Marriage are some of the workshops led by Rabbi Marjorie Slome and Eve Coulson, experts in interfaith family isues. In the New York metropolitan area, your company can offer its employees these programs, at no charge, through the *Jewish Connections Partnership of the Jewish Outreach Instititute, Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services (212)399-2685-x228; mslome@jbfcs.org*

—COMPILED BY NAOMI DANIS

Memorial Day In Tel Aviv

BY TALIA CARNER

ERNEST HEMINGWAY SAID that each person is a product of the landscape of both a native land and an adoptive land.

I feel the power of the statement as I rush to squeeze my rented Fiat into a parking space in front of a beauty parlor. The moment I glance at the clock and realize it is eleven o'clock, the melancholic music played on the national radio today is abruptly cut. A siren pierces the Tel Aviv skies. A long, sharp, straight line of shrill joins the echo of dozens of others, and together they weave a thick, pulsating blanket that holds the city in its demanding urgency.

The signal for the moment of silence in honor of the men and women killed in the battles of Israel is a repeat of the one that last night marked the start of Memorial Day.

In an instant, I am reminded of the fable of the sleep curse cast upon a kingdom, where the citizens all fall asleep at the same moment, wherever they are: at the cooking pot, on the milking bench, by the water well. As the siren erupts, I hastily desert my car, now parked lopsided against the sidewalk like a novocained grin. I stand at attention.

Across the street in the school yard, a group of soccer players is standing still; the ball continues its slow roll. The boys' expressions are solemn. No snickering, no sneak elbowing. Up and down the street, cars have stopped. Their owners are standing outside the open doors, frozen. Through the beauty shop window I see the hairdresser standing erect. Two customers have ejected themselves from their chairs and are glued to the spots where their feet have landed.

Strangers to one another, we stand united by the images floating on the projection screens of our minds. We see fresh faces, taut bodies, eager eyes, optimistic smiles—men and women who are no longer with us. Carved in time, the dead remain forever young.

I lower my head and allow a wave of sorrow for the soldiers I once knew to wash over me. Amiram, my high school classmate, with a mischievous grin, was fearless. The first to go, he was my first devastating loss, and got more tears than I had imagined my eyes could store. Asher will forever remain the tall, blond, and freckled fifteen-year-old I was in love with, and who, across the classroom, shyly let me know that he shared those feelings. The last time I bumped into him, we were both in military uniform, riding the bus. He inquired about my boyfriend, and rushed off. Uri, with laughing green eyes, at twenty-eight loved the theater and, in between piloting war planes, dove into the lecture halls at the university, accumulating credits in literature. He waited patiently for my improbable marriage to dissolve. When I finally separated, I learned that he had been killed three weeks before.

The sirens continue to reverberate in the endless, open sky, where nothing stops their piercing sound. I don't want the moment to pass; I want to stay with the young men who populate my world of "what ifs."

I look around at the contemporary high-rises with colorful awnings and the artistically paved sidewalks. The landscape in the front yards of the buildings and in the street islands is that of fire: Birds of Paradise encircled by roses in red, orange, pink, and yellow. Yet, the fragrance that reaches my nostrils is soft. Rosemary and lavender.

The breeze moves the tops of the trees gently, nudging us all back to life. Unlike the citizens of the cursed kingdom who wake up unchanged and within seconds resume life, the citizens of Israel, although they unfreeze to keep on walking, driving cars, playing ball, and blow-drying hair, will never wake up from the curse of the cutouts left by the disappearance of young lives.

And young lives are continuing to be claimed. The men I once knew and loved are being replaced by the sons and daughters of my friends. It never stops. Day after tomorrow, across the ocean, I will be back at my other land, whose landscape is comforting, undemanding. Its soil never blackmailed me for the blood of such as Amiram, Asher, and Uri. In three weeks, Memorial Day will be celebrated in my adoptive land. The day will be marked by baton-twirling parades, super sales at Macy's, and barbeques at the beaches. Only those whose losses have been very direct will remember the cemeteries.

TALIA CARNER, AN ISRAELI-BORN WRITER NOW LIVING IN LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK, WON THE BIALIK AWARD FOR LITERATURE AT AGE 10. HER PERSONAL ESSAYS HAVE APPEARED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS.